

# The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism

Edited by Gerad Gentry  
and Konstantin Pollok



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## THE IMAGINATION IN GERMAN IDEALISM AND ROMANTICISM

For philosophers of German idealism and early German Romanticism, the imagination is central to issues ranging from hermeneutics to transcendental logic and from ethics to aesthetics. This volume of new essays brings together, for the first time, comprehensive and critical reflections on the significances of the imagination during this period, with essays on Kant and the imagination, the imagination in post-Kantian German idealism, and the imagination in early German romanticism. The essays explore the many and varied uses of the imagination and discuss whether they form a coherent or shared notion or whether they embody points of philosophical divergence within these traditions. They shed new light on one of the most important and enigmatic aspects of human nature, as understood in the context of a profoundly influential era of western thought.

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*Lewis University and the University of Chicago*

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*To Megan,  
Eliana, August, and Lillian*

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## *A Note on the Cover Image*

Something happened from 1830 and 1845 that was as revolutionary for the history of painting in the following centuries as the French Revolution in European geopolitical history. J. M. W. Turner painted *Death on a Pale Horse* (1830), *Sunrise, with a Boat between Headlands* (1840), *Steam and Speed* (1844), and finally *Europa and the Bull* (1845), which serves as a cover of this volume as a whole. In a real way, Impressionism made its anonymous debut on the world stage during this period. It was the nascent impressionism of Turner that was the biggest influence on Claude Monet's giving full-fledged birth to Impressionism (according to Monet himself).

In many respects, I take Kant's account of *the imagination* in a tripartite critique of reason to be to post-Kantian Idealism and Romanticism what Turner's work was to impressionism. The relationship between Kant, the post-Kantian Idealists, and Romantics is of such a complex and dynamic nature, there are ways in which the analogy with Turner is perhaps the most fitting image one can give.

Gerad Gentry

# *Introduction to the Significances of the Imagination in Kant, Idealism, and Romanticism*

Gerad Gentry<sup>1</sup>

## 1. An Overview

According to Schelling, “the splendid word ‘imagination’ [Einbildungskraft] actually means the power of *mutual informing into unity* [Ineinsbildung] upon which all creation really is based.”<sup>2</sup> This is quite an attribution: The imagination is the power of *mutually forming into unity*. It is the source of true synthesis. If that were not enough, he would have us agree that all creation is based on it, and without it nothing could be simultaneously ideal and real. He continues, “It is the power whereby something ideal is simultaneously something real, the soul simultaneously the body, the power of individuation that is the real creative power.” It makes possible the unity between the necessity of reason and material existence. This, at least, is the resplendent power of the imagination according to Schelling. Surprisingly, on this point, Schelling is not alone. In fact, something very much like this view is definitive of German Idealism and Romanticism.

Such claims naturally beg for a corresponding critical account of the imagination that might begin to give a meaningful answer to the overriding question: What is the imagination in and for the philosophy of Kant, the Idealists,<sup>3</sup> and the Romantics?<sup>4</sup> One of the best ways of entering into an understanding of these intertwined philosophical accounts, their subtle insights, and important distinctions is, I suggest, by following these two questions: *what is the imagination?* and *why is it so important for these*

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Paul Franks, Megan Gentry, Kristin Gjesdal, Keren Gorodeisky, Johannes Haag, George Khushf, Tobias Rosefeldt, Anne Pollok, Konstantin Pollok, Brian Tracz, and Jessica Williams for feedback on all or portions of the material forming this introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, p. 32.      <sup>3</sup> e.g., Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

<sup>4</sup> e.g., Schlegel, Schiller, Solger, Novalis, Hölderlin, and Goethe; these lists are not meant to be comprehensive. For instance, German Idealism should include figures such as Reinhold, and the categorization of others such as Schelling, Hölderlin, Goethe, and Schleiermacher in one camp or the other presents its own challenges.

*thinkers?* This volume seeks to bring to light and underscore the importance of these questions and their possible answers.

Understanding the imagination is important not only because it is central to one of the most productive and influential periods in the history of philosophy, but also because it represents a topic of substantial relevance to contemporary debates in philosophy. The imagination engages directly with a range of traditional problems, from hylomorphic models of form and content to hermeneutical and ethical problems of perception, expression, and tradition. The imagination is significant not merely for questions in epistemology, but also for metaphysics, aesthetics, and, as some contemporary philosophers have shown, to current sociopolitical issues in philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

How central is the imagination for Kant, the post-Kantian Idealists, and Romantics? In the A-deduction of Kant's first *Critique* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), the imagination is front and center. If critics thought the B-deduction was a move away from the imagination, the third *Critique* (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*) once again places the imagination at the fore. For the Idealists who, like Kant, strive for a critical system that grounds the necessity of reason, the imagination presents itself as "one of Kant's greatest services to philosophy,"<sup>6</sup> his most important insight, the "germ of speculation,"<sup>7</sup> and his "truly speculative idea."<sup>8</sup>

Not surprisingly, when the Idealists' attempt to overcome apparent shortcomings in Kant's system,<sup>9</sup> they do not merely retain the imagination at the level of the *a priori* principles and forms of judgment as Kant had done, but place it at the very core of their methods and employ it to refute skepticism about possible unfounded starting points to their own systems. As Sally Sedgwick notes, "to varying degrees, each of these later idealists believes that, although Kant's philosophy invites the charge of dualism, it also contains resources for overcoming it."<sup>10</sup> The imagination is the *Grundkraft*, that fundamental force within Kant's idealism capable of overcoming his system's shortcomings. Put positively, it is that by which a system of idealism can be completed.

<sup>5</sup> e.g., Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge* takes up something like a principle of an artistic imagination as a necessary component of perceiving well and living richly-responsible social and moral lives; and her variation of virtue ethics has deep roots in Kant's critical work.

<sup>6</sup> WL 12.157. <sup>7</sup> GW, p. 80. <sup>8</sup> GW, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> For a pivotal account of this relationship between Kant and the Idealists that is both detailed and expansive, see Paul Franks, *All or Nothing*. Of particular note is Franks' account of the role of skepticism in the methods and first principles developed in post-Kantian Idealism.

<sup>10</sup> Sedgwick 2007, p. 1.

This is why when Fichte takes up the principle of “the I,” for example, he does so first by proving what he takes the I to be. He does not *posit* the I as a version of Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception, as he is sometimes depicted as doing. Fichte’s uniqueness consists in the very *proof* that he gives of the identity of the I. This proof, in the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, places the twofold productive power of the imagination at the heart of the identity of the I. The I, far from being simply posited, is the *result* of a proof that depends on a principle of the imagination. Similarly, for the early German Romantics (who, drawing on Kant’s third *Critique*, sought to emphasize the necessity of aesthetics for a rich form of reason and life) the “free play of the imagination”<sup>11</sup> and “free lawfulness of the imagination”<sup>12</sup> become key insights grounding “genius” and “*Bildung*.” These principles yield, on their accounts, possibilities for meaningfully unifying philosophy with art and unifying rational form with organic growth.<sup>13</sup>

In what follows, I will briefly identify some of the most significant roles that the imagination plays in Kant’s critical Idealism and in post-Kantian German Idealism and Romanticism. There are two major limitations to this effort. The first is that such an introductory overview is necessarily not comprehensive and leaves out multiple functions and nuances of the imagination. The second weakness is that even those points of significance that I do identify must necessarily remain merely suggestive. This means that I will give reason to think that the imagination is central in the ways I suggest, but each one of these points is itself a thesis pregnant with full-fledged accounts. The contributions to this volume will go some way toward addressing this second weakness, but even the volume as a whole should not be seen as an exhaustive account of the significances of the imagination. Instead, it is a step toward motivating and grounding a comprehensive account of the imagination.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *KU* 5:286–7.      <sup>12</sup> *KU* 5:240–1.

<sup>13</sup> For a helpful introduction to early German Romanticism in compatible terms to the account I am giving, see Dalia Nassar, *The Relevance of Romanticism*: “to make philosophy poetical and poetry philosophical, to introduce poetic insight into ethical norms, to bring art and science together – these were the aims of the movement that has become known as *Romanticism*” (2014a, p. 1).

<sup>14</sup> To be clear, there are many excellent isolated accounts of the imagination. That is not new. In the last hundred years, however, the imagination has not been viewed as a foundation of this philosophical family of thought. *That* is a matter of emphasis with wide reaching effects on most sub-conversations within these systems. In other words, the standard lack of emphasis on the imagination is tantamount to scholars treating the synthetic unity of apperception as a matter on par with Kant’s account of imperfect duties in the second *Critique*. The status of the thing in question matters. Plenty of scholars talk about the imagination, but the status and totality of the



Section 2 of this introduction offers an introductory overview of the significances of the imagination in Kant's critical philosophy and Section 3 glosses its significances in German Idealism and Romanticism. I suggest that Kant's use of the imagination is the source of or context for the use(s) found in the works of the post-Kantian German Idealists and Romantics. Section 4 then provides a brief sketch of the contributions to this volume.

## 2. Kant and the Imagination

### 2.1. *The Imagination and Synthesis in General*

In his well-known book, *Von Kant Bis Hegel*, Richard Kroner writes, "How is synthesis possible? That is the central question of transcendental idealism" [Wie ist Synthesis möglich? Das ist die Kernfrage des transzendentalen Idealismus].<sup>15</sup> I take the answer to this question (and, by extension, the question itself) to be at the heart of Idealism. I suggest that the imagination is the explanatory key and answer to Kroner's "*Kernfrage*." In particular, I suggest that one way of understanding the coherence between Kant's three *Critiques* – and between the variations of Idealism and Romanticism that take inspiration therefrom – helpfully begins with the four major roles of the imagination in Kant's Idealism. There is not space to go into detail, but I suggest that the following four functions of the imagination are compatible with each other under a single, coherent term "imagination." Bringing these four functions of the imagination into view not only prepares the way for understanding the underlying relation of the contribution to this volume, but also to refuting a range of incoherency claims concerning Kant's tripartite critique of *pure reason*.

### 2.2. *The Imagination as the Power of Synthesis in the Critique of Pure Reason*

There are at least three formal distinctions to be made regarding the imagination as the source of synthesis. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

imagination makes all the difference in where we go from such discussions. Since we began the work of developing this volume and hosting conferences and sessions on the subject beginning in early 2015, the literature on the imagination has expanded rapidly. The key now will be finding a coherent framework by which to draw these developing conversations into a systematic whole. I trust that this volume meaningfully aids such an effort.

<sup>15</sup> *My translation*, Kroner 1921, p. 77; cf. pp. 80–1.

Kant differentiates between the “empirical synthesis,”<sup>16</sup> the “figurative synthesis,”<sup>17</sup> and the “intellectual synthesis.”<sup>18</sup> How we understand intellectual synthesis will depend to a large degree on the story we tell about the coherency between the A and B-deduction accounts of the imagination. That matter is controversial and must be left to the side in this introduction. Kant, however, sums up all types of synthesis in what he terms “synthesis in general,” and of this he says, “synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination.”<sup>19</sup> The empirical synthesis of the imagination is that whereby a manifold is synthesized into an intuitable whole (i.e., an empirical intuition) and is most typically identified with the function of sensibility.<sup>20</sup> The figurative synthesis of the imagination is that whereby the pure concepts of the understanding are schematized and so capable of being applied to “objects of experience” or empirically synthesized wholes.<sup>21</sup> The intellectual synthesis of the imagination is that whereby pure representations arise, and of this, Kant says:

The unity of apperception in relation to the synthesis of the imagination is the understanding, and this very same unity, in relation to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is the **pure understanding**. [Die Einheit der Apperzeption in Beziehung auf die Synthesis der Einbildungskraft ist der Verstand, und eben dieselbe Einheit, beziehungsweise auf die transzendente Synthesis der Einbildungskraft, der reine Verstand.] In the understanding there are therefore pure *a priori* cognitions that contain the necessary unity of the pure synthesis of the imagination in regard to all possible appearances. These, however, are the categories, i.e., the pure concepts of the understanding. (A119)<sup>22</sup>

The intellectual synthesis of the imagination as a quality of pure understanding, and not of sensibility, presents itself to many as either a problematic reading of Kant or as an accurate reading but a problematic move by Kant, a discrepancy that he tried to address in his changes from the A to B-edition. It seems to me that *that* story is itself a highly problematic reading, but such matters must wait for the contribution chapters and scholarship outside this volume. In any case, the imagination reoccurs for

<sup>16</sup> B164, A101, B129–30, B151.    <sup>17</sup> B151.    <sup>18</sup> B151.

<sup>19</sup> A78/B103–4; to say that “a mere effect of the imagination” can be replaced with “a function of the understanding” is not a counter point. On one story of the coherency between the A and B-editions, it is precisely necessary that if the imagination is constitutive of the understanding (not just sensibility), then it is right to describe certain functions of the imagination as nothing but a “function” or “application” of the understanding. There is no necessary problem there (regardless of the fit between the A and B-editions).

<sup>20</sup> B151, B129–30, KU 5:287, 5:292.    <sup>21</sup> A138–40/B177–9, *my emphasis*.    <sup>22</sup> Cf. B104.

Kant in both editions in a variety of ways as the *source of synthesis* in the understanding and sensibility.

### 2.3. *Free Lawful Synthesis of the Imagination*

By the time of the third Critique, Kant introduces a new power of synthesis under the principle of a “free lawfulness of the imagination”<sup>23</sup> or “purposiveness without an end.”<sup>24</sup> This form of synthesis is an indeterminate play, a harmony and disharmony, a synthesis that proves troublesome for standard cognitive determinations of the understanding. The judgment structure of “free play of the imagination and understanding”<sup>25</sup> is itself grounded in a synthetic principle *a priori*.<sup>26</sup> However, instead of the synthetic unity of apperception (which grounds determining judgments in the first *Critique*), the relevant principle is the “principle of purposiveness”<sup>27</sup> or the “free lawfulness of the imagination.”<sup>28</sup> This new principle of synthesis makes possible the deduction of synthetic, *a priori* aesthetic judgments, which result in indeterminate concepts or ideas.<sup>29</sup> The key difference to note in this new form of synthesis made possible by the principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination is that the synthetic unity afforded takes an indeterminate, productive, and reflective form.<sup>30</sup> Because the unity is a free yet lawful synthetic whole,<sup>31</sup> the only form adequate to such a content is an (aesthetic or teleological) “idea.”<sup>32</sup> In such

<sup>23</sup> *KU* 5:340; Cf. *KU* 5:244.

<sup>24</sup> For various accounts of purposiveness and the free lawfulness of the imagination, see Makkreel 1990, pp. 45–65; Allison 2001, pp. 319, 59–60, 30–42; Longuenesse 2003; Zuckert 2007, pp. 280–3; Kneiler 2009, pp. 3, 76, 51–3; Gorodeisky 2010; Ginsborg 2015, pp. 82–93.

<sup>25</sup> *KU* 5:286–7, 5:217–8, 5:380; For more on the free play as a law, see both Gorodeisky’s and my own contribution in this volume, and Allison 2001, pp. 49, 187–8; C.f., Förster 2012, pp. 127–8.

<sup>26</sup> *KU* 5:197–8; 20:225–6, 20:202.

<sup>27</sup> For Kant on the synthetic *a priori* principle of purposiveness – which he sometimes calls the “free lawfulness of the imagination” (5:240) and a principle of “lawfulness without a law” (5:241), see: *KU* 5:286, 5:288, 5:376, 5:417; C.f., his correspondence concerning the “discovery” of this principle, *Philosophical Correspondence*, pp. 127–8.

<sup>28</sup> *KU* 5:240–2.

<sup>29</sup> See the *KU* “Resolution to the Antinomy of Taste” for more on the way in which aesthetic ideas serve as indeterminate unifiers (i.e., aesthetic determiners).

<sup>30</sup> *KU* 5:340; cf. *KU* 5:244.

<sup>31</sup> This synthetic play still takes the form of “subsumption” (*KU* 5:286–7; cf. Gorodeisky 2011, p. 420), where this subsumption is not under determinate concepts of the understanding but rather under “aesthetic ideas” (*KU* 5:314) and “faculties” themselves (*KU* 5:286–7).

<sup>32</sup> A common view is that only concepts can serve as unifying forms for some sensible matter, but Kant is not quite so strict with his logical and transcendental hylomorphism. In addition to a wide range of hylomorphic terms at work in the third *Critique*, Kant elsewhere defines “form” (the unifying term or concept for a manifold) as the “matter” of the *judgment itself* (so in “S is P” both S and P are

judgments, an idea is united with the aesthetic or teleological content in a universally necessary way.<sup>33</sup> Much more would need to be said about the imagination in the aesthetic realm, but there is no obviously problematic relationship between Kant's conception of the imagination in the first and third *Critique* as I've glossed them,<sup>34</sup> nor even with his (non-transcendental) psychological account, such as that found in his *Anthropology*.<sup>35</sup> Above all, what should be clear is that the imagination is at the heart of Kant's critical revolution and its handling deserves the complexity and fidelity toward which this volume serves merely as a propaedeutic.

#### 2.4. From Kant to the Post-Kantian Idealists

At the very least, we have strong textual and conceptual reasons for taking seriously the relevance and interpretive worth of the Idealist's claim (as we will see shortly) to be inheriting Kant's system and emphasizing his notion of the imagination in their own accounts. For example, Hegel identifies in Kant precisely those three theoretical forms of synthesis just discussed. On Hegel's interpretation of Kant, the "original synthetic unity of apperception," like the "principle of figurative synthesis," is "spontaneity, the absolute synthetic activity of the productive imagination, [and] is conceived as the principle of the very sensibility which was previously characterized only as receptivity."<sup>36</sup> Not only does Hegel interpret Kant's first *Critique* as attributing three forms of synthesis to the imagination, he further argues that in precisely this "triplicity" of the imagination "alone" exists an "authentic *a priori*" and "the very possibility of *a posteriority*."<sup>37</sup> Whether or not we agree with Hegel on that point, his is a well-considered view that demands careful consideration.

the "matter" and the copula the "form." Kant's hylomorphism does not just concern *sensible objects*: "in every judgment, subject and predicate constitute matter, and the relation of both the form," whereby, "matter is the determinable – form the determination" (29:847). For more on Kant's transcendental and logical hylomorphism see MacFarlane 2000, p. 54 and Longuenesse 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Because this is an indeterminate unity, it does not yield cognition. While it is universally necessary for the judging subject, it cannot determine the external world.

<sup>34</sup> See Gorodeisky, Chapter 4 in this volume, and 2010 for more on this.

<sup>35</sup> See Zöller, Chapter 3 in this volume, for more on this.

<sup>36</sup> *GW*, 69–70; Hegel retains this threefold work of the imagination but integrates it into the very method of reason. Nevertheless, it is distinguishable at specific moments in his Encyclopedic system, such as: *EG* 209–11.

<sup>37</sup> *GW*, p. 80.

### 3. Tracing the Imagination in Post-Kantian German Idealism and Romanticism

#### 3.1. *The Imagination as a Productive Power of the Mind*

The imagination is a term of the time and its casting includes prominent works such as Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Spinoza's *Ethics*.<sup>38</sup> Because of this we might be tempted to reduce the term "imagination" to a mere psychological trope from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, employed as a vague catch-all for unexplained or inexplicable functions (whether related to memory or one's capacity to form fictions). To some degree, this is right. Nor is the matter always clarified by turning to Kant or the other Idealists. After all, Kant gives vague reference to the work of the imagination as a "hidden art in the depths of the human soul," which has struck some critics as precisely his way of identifying an unknowable or mystical function of reason.<sup>39</sup> Such statements can make the imagination seem opaque and non-essential. To the contrary, however, from Kant through Idealism and Romanticism, the imagination takes on a close-knit family of meanings that are at the very heart of these systematic and fragmentary movements.

For the most general and all-encompassing definition, I suggest that we start by viewing the imagination as a *productive power of the mind*. It is as *the* or *a* productive power of the mind that it is at the heart of what unites and distinguishes the traditions of thought from Kant to the post-Kantian German Idealists and early German Romantics.

Where for Kant the imagination becomes associated most closely with a productive power of synthesis,<sup>40</sup> for the post-Kantian German Idealists, this productive power of synthesis becomes a fundamental feature (or principle) structuring the very method of reason and the logical relation by which they ground their systems. For the early German Romantics, this productive power of synthesis becomes a fundamental function of the reflective life and growth of individuals in a community. It is the unifying term identifying the proper relationship between organic and aesthetic production in life on the one hand, with the necessity of reason on the other. In each case, however, the imagination is far from some mystical

<sup>38</sup> Hobbes 1982, p. 87; Spinoza 2018, Part V; cf. Wolff's *Ontologia*. For more on Wolff, Baumgarten, and Lessing's accounts of the imagination and their influence on Kant, see Makkreel 1990, pp. 9–16; and Kneller 2009, pp. 38–42.

<sup>39</sup> A141/B181; For more on Kant's conception of the imagination as the "hidden art in the depths of the human soul," see Matherne, "Kant and the Art of Schematism," 2014, pp. 181–2, 200.

<sup>40</sup> And, I will suggest later on, he identifies it with three distinct kinds of synthesis.

function of the mind. Rather, it is consistently employed as one of the most important principles grounding the systematic or fragmentary accounts of rational *life*.

This productive power of the mind will find unique specification in each of these diverse movements. For Kant, as we saw, it was central not only to sensibility and the understanding in cognition, but also to an indeterminate, aesthetic necessity of reason. For the Romantics, it will suggest a fundamentally aesthetic and organic quality to rationality. It will structure the artistic *Bildung* found from Goethe to Hölderlin and even Schlegel.<sup>41</sup> For the Idealists, it will suggest the possibility of grounding a unity between the *supersensible* and the *sensible* domains, of overcoming a perceived problematic dualism remaining from Kant, and will make possible a grounding of the otherwise free-floating *a priori* principles of reason.

### 3.2. Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Kant's first *Critique* account of the productive imagination had a particularly significant impact on Fichte's Idealism. While the supreme principle that Kant identifies with the theoretical "I" is the synthetic unity of apperception, Fichte thinks that Kant's principle is inadequately grounded. Following Reinhold but striving to avoid an infinite regress,<sup>42</sup> Fichte seeks a principle of self-consciousness that can simultaneously establish its own ground. Seeking such a *self-grounding ground* of both theoretical and practical reason, Fichte turns to the non-real imagination as the methodological structure of the I whereby reason is justified and whole.

Put differently, when Fichte reaches for a single, self-grounding ground for his own system of Idealism in the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, he does so not through a simple identity of the I, as interpreters often suggest.<sup>43</sup> He does not *assert* a principle of immediate self-consciousness, but rather *strives to prove* a very specific kind of identity of the I, where this identity is defined and proven in terms of a twofold movement of the *imagination*. It is this twofold (i) outward determination and, through self-limitation, (ii) reciprocal reflection<sup>44</sup> of the productive imagination that simultaneously structures and makes valid the "identity" of the I, which, in turn, grounds both theoretical and practical knowledge<sup>45</sup>:

<sup>41</sup> For more on the various conceptions and significance of *Bildung*, see Pinkard 2008, pp. 7–9, 222.

<sup>42</sup> For more on the Idealists answers to the problem of an infinite regress, see Franks 2005, pp. 219–29.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Kroner 1921, p. 449; cf. Sedgwick 2007, ch. 1.

<sup>44</sup> W pp. 202, 211, 214, 142–3, 194–5; *EW*, p. 244.

<sup>45</sup> W pp. 190–3, 185, 150, 268. Cf. W p. 194.

This interplay of the self, in and with itself, whereby it posits itself at once as finite and infinite – an interplay that consists, as it were, in self-conflict, and is self-reproducing, in that the self endeavors to unite the irreconcilable, now attempting to receive the infinite in the form of the finite, now, baffled, positing it again outside the latter, and in that very moment seeking once more to entertain it under the form of finitude – this is the power of *imagination*.<sup>46</sup>

Fichte unabashedly employs the productive imagination to prove the ground of the science of knowledge. Interestingly, a common move in scholarship on Fichte is to speak of the principle of the I as “posited,” where being posited is taken to mean “assumed” or “presupposed.” What is not typically attended to, however, is that the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* takes itself to *prove* the identity of the I as an adequate ground for theoretical and practical knowledge. Whether we find fault in that proof is another matter, but that he gives such a proof is paramount. For Fichte, the I is not a presupposition, but rather a *result*. To be sure, it is the ground of theoretical and practical knowledge,<sup>47</sup> but it serves as a valid ground for Fichte *because* he takes himself to have proven the identity of the I in a way that justifies its use as a ground of all knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Since it is through this principle of a twofold movement of the imagination that Fichte takes himself to prove the identity of the I, an adequate critique of Fichte’s self-grounding ground of knowledge must involve a critique of his account of the imagination. Surprisingly, however, his proof, *via* the imagination, is regularly bypassed in favor of discussions of the resulting identity of the I. But just as no one attempts to deny a logical proof by taking the conclusion in isolation from the premises, so also such a move cannot be a valid means of critiquing Fichte’s proof in his *Wissenschaftslehre*. A critique of Fichte’s conception of the imagination must be at the heart of any adequate rejection or retention of the ground of his *Wissenschaftslehre*.

### 3.3. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling

In contrast with Fichte’s inheritance of the productive imagination from Kant, Schelling sees a more auspicious system of Idealism in a deeply aesthetic principle and method of reason. Put differently, because Fichte’s system of knowledge begins with the necessary form of reason, he drew more deeply on Kant’s first *Critique* account of the imagination. By contrast, Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* takes nature as the priority for

<sup>46</sup> Wp. 193.

<sup>47</sup> Wp. 193.

<sup>48</sup> Wpp. 202, 211, 214, 142–3, 194–5; *EW*, p. 244.

developing the method of his system and so, not surprisingly, sees greater value in Kant's third *Critique* account of the imagination as an aesthetic free lawfulness of reason.<sup>49</sup> Like Hegel after him, his *System of Transcendental Idealism* relies on the fundamental insight of Kant's purposive, free lawful power of the imagination.<sup>50</sup> For Schelling this principle is not logical method (as Hegel will see it). Instead, it is a quality of artistic genius.<sup>51</sup> Concluding his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling says,

This productive power is the same whereby art also achieves the impossible, namely to resolve an infinite opposition in a finite product. It is the poetic gift . . . and its name is imagination. Hence, that which appears to us outside the sphere of consciousness, as real, and that which appears within it, as ideal, or as the world of art, are also products of one and the same activity.<sup>52</sup>

The imagination, this "productive power," resolves the infinite and finite because it is "one and the same activity." Following from this, of the "absolute act of will itself," Schelling continues:

. . . now if this consciously free activity, which in acting is opposed to the objective, although required to be one with it, is intuited in its original identity with the objective . . . we finally obtain by this the highest power of self-intuition; and this . . . must appear, where it exists, as absolutely contingent; and this absolute contingency in the highest power of self-intuition is what we designate by means of the idea of *genius*. These are the phases, unalterable and fixed for all knowledge, in the history of self-consciousness . . . and from thence by reason and choice up to the supreme union of freedom and necessity in art.<sup>53</sup>

Whatever the imagination turns out to be on close inspection, the fact that Schelling identifies it in an aesthetic sense as that single activity at the heart of the "absolute act of will itself," that Fichte places it at the explanatory core of his "I" grounding all theoretical and practical knowledge, and that Hegel identifies the imagination as "one of Kant's greatest services to philosophy," requires admission that the imagination is central to the accounts of the German Idealists. Hegel even laments that Kant does not explicate the *a priori* nature of the imagination as carefully as he

<sup>49</sup> For more on the difference between Schelling and Fichte's systems of idealism, see Beiser 2008, pp. 502–3.

<sup>50</sup> *System*, pp. 625–6, 629–31, 348–52; his interpretation of it differs radically from Kant's and Hegel's.

<sup>51</sup> *System*, pp. 623–4. Cf. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, pp. 7, 13. <sup>52</sup> *System*, pp. 625–6.

<sup>53</sup> *System*, pp. 633–4.



should have. In Hegel's words, the "productive imagination has been allowed to get by easily in the Kantian philosophy, first because its pure Idea is set forth in a rather mixed-up way like other potencies, almost in the ordinary form of a psychological faculty, though an *a priori* one."<sup>54</sup>

### 3.4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Hegel's absolute idealism is a system aimed at unifying the necessity of reason (the ideal) in its totality with material existence (the real). Absolute idealism further endeavors to show that the necessity of reason has an internal structure that is justifiable, knowable, and one. His system of idealism strives for nothing less than the proof of the true unity of reason in itself and with the world. In this aim, he does not see himself as opposed to Kant, nor as substantially departing from Kant's critical philosophy, but rather as working out the full requirements of a complete critique of pure reason so that no principle remains a merely free-floating assertion of reason. Instead, every principle must be grounded in a method and structure that nowhere relies on a postulated or presupposed starting point. To Hegel, Kant's free lawfulness of the imagination is Kant's great insight because it captures the essence whereby a self-grounding method of reason might proceed. It is this principle of the imagination in Kant that suggests the insight that must be worked out into a *Science of Logic*.

In his early and late writings, Hegel argues that one misses Kant's true philosophical merit if one places greater emphasis on the categories.<sup>55</sup> Rather, Hegel suggests, Kant was not merely right to distinguish the *a priori* and *a posteriori* and to give us the categories, but importantly also to give us that by which the dualism is genuinely unifiable: the imagination. In Hegel's words: "we must not place Kant's merit in this, that he puts the forms, as expressed in the categories, into the human cognitive faculty . . . We must find it, rather in his having put the Idea of authentic *a priority* in the form of transcendental imagination"<sup>56</sup>; and, further, that the "germ of speculation lies in this triplicity alone. For the root judgment, or duality, is in [the transcendental imagination] as well, and hence the very possibility of *a posteriority*."<sup>57</sup> Such passages suggest that Hegel took the imagination to be important not merely for Kant,<sup>58</sup> but also for his own account of

<sup>54</sup> GW, p. 73.    <sup>55</sup> GW, p. 80.    <sup>56</sup> GW, p. 80.    <sup>57</sup> GW, p. 80.

<sup>58</sup> For more on Hegel's interpretation of the transcendental imagination in Kant, in addition to the contributions in this volume, see Longuenesse 2010, pp. 272–3.

“speculative thought.”<sup>59</sup> So much so, that he claims, in *The Science of Logic*, that the free lawfulness of the imagination as the principle of purposiveness constitutes “Kant’s greatest service to philosophy.”<sup>60</sup> I will return to these passages in my chapter contribution on Hegel and the imagination in *The Science of Logic*.

### 3.5. Friedrich Hölderlin

For Hölderlin, whose thought embodies so much of both Idealism and Romanticism, the imagination is central to an aesthetic turn in Idealism. According to Hölderlin (or whoever the author is of *Das Älteste Systemprogramm des Detuschen Idealismus*), the imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] shows up as the revolutionary core of a new “mythology of reason” [*Mythologie der Vernunft*] which involves making “ideas aesthetic” and making mythology “reasonable” [*vernünftig*] and “philosophical.” This need is necessary in order “to make philosophy sensual.” Making philosophy sensual, in turn, is to serve as the basis for establishing true “freedom and equality” [*Freiheit und Gleichheit*] for humans. Terry Pinkard recently summarized this aesthetic turn of the imagination for the early German Romantics as follows:

In his third *Critique*, Kant himself had noted, almost in passing, that the experience of the beautiful gives us a sense of what the underlying unity of nature and freedom might be, of something that would be itself neither “nature” nor “freedom.” The Romantics of Jena took that seriously and tried to show that it was through diverse acts of the imagination, especially those involved in *art* of all sorts, that we get at what the “whole” of reality is really like, and not through the further systematization of Kantian philosophy, as Reinhold and Fichte had tried to do.<sup>61</sup>

If we follow Hölderlin’s lead and set aside easy attempts at placing the early German Romantics in opposition to Idealism,<sup>62</sup> we can recognize that the emphasis of the Romantics was indeed on the “diverse acts of the imagination, especially those involved in art” as a source of a unified life of

<sup>59</sup> *EG* 211; cf. Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, where he places substantial emphasis on the “universality of the artistic imagination” (*Aesthetics*, pp. 493, 965). The free lawfulness of the artistic imagination, as that “spiritual activity” (*Aesthetics*, p. 280), combines with “philosophical thought” to form the highest standpoint of thought: “speculative thought” (*Aesthetics* p. 976; cf. *R* p. 580).

<sup>60</sup> *WL* 12.157. <sup>61</sup> Pinkard, 2018, *Introduction: Hegel’s Path to the Phenomenology*, p. xv.

<sup>62</sup> Such an interpretation does not yet weigh in on debates about how Hölderlin should be understood to differ from Idealists such as Fichte. For one account of this, see Richard Eldridge, “Hölderlin, Philosophy, Subjectivity, and Finitude,” 2014, pp. 130–44.

necessity and freedom within a flourishing culture and within individual and communal growth.

### 3.6. *Friedrich Schlegel*

While the Romantics were broadly skeptical of overly abstract and rigidly systematic efforts at grounding the unity of reason in determinate existence, and while their own work emphasized the aesthetic in life (as opposed to “mere” abstract reflection), theirs was not a neo-classical or pre-critical attempt to deny the advances of Kant’s thought. Rather they strove to represent the best and richest path forward in light of a Kantian advance of reason.<sup>63</sup> They often shared the Idealist goals, but differed in method. For figures such as Schlegel and Novalis,<sup>64</sup> this path depended fundamentally on the activity of the imagination to flesh out – through art, expansively construed to include philosophy – the tendencies of the age (as Allen Speight discusses in Chapter 11), to critique it, and to cultivate a more dynamic form of living.<sup>65</sup> True art is not something other than philosophy, but rather that medium by which the dynamic, living content of philosophy can be made real to us. This was the aim of his 1799–800 encyclopedia work.<sup>66</sup> In this sense, for Schlegel, art is not something higher than philosophy. Art is the highest realization of philosophy.<sup>67</sup> It is the richest means of realizing the infinite and finite, those same aims that characterize philosophy. At the heart of artistic formation and experience is the imagination as the creative power of reason, which structures a dynamic method of “becoming and life.”<sup>68</sup>

In praise of volume four of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, Schlegel describes this dynamic form of living grounded on the imagination as “the great

<sup>63</sup> Schlegel writes, “I wanted to focus attention on what the greatest thinkers of every age have divined (only very darkly, to be sure) until Kant discovered the table of categories and there was light in the spirit of man” (1971, p. 260). Cf. Schlegel’s connection between the necessity within Idealism to “transcend itself” and the relevance of mythology to that systematic self-transcendence: “Gespräch Über Die Poesi,” 1968a, pp. 83–4. Cf. Schelling’s definition of mythology in *The Philosophy of Art*, p. 51.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Redding, “Mathematics, Computation, Language, and Poetry: The Novalis Paradox,” pp. 222, 231–5. For a helpful account of some important differences between Novalis and Schlegel, see Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 2014c, p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Schlegel 1968b, p. 74. For more from Schlegel on the power of the “imagination” and its role in “the form of all poetic representation” and his notion of “wit,” see his “Gespräch Über Die Poesi,” 1968a, p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> Nassar 2014b, p. 126.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Gorodeisky, “No Poetry, No Reality,” 2014, pp. 163–79; and John Smith, “Friedrich Schlegel’s Romantic Calculus,” 2014, pp. 239–40, 251–3.

<sup>68</sup> Nassar 2014b, pp. 83–4.

spectacle of humanity itself, and the art of all arts, the art of living.”<sup>69</sup> I suggest that this connection with the imagination is not tenuous, but rather provides an important path toward recognizing the deep affinities between German Romanticism and Idealism.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.7. Friedrich Schiller

Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, like Schlegel’s work, displays a nuance in the relationship between art and philosophy easily missed on superficial readings of his rejection of first principles. Here, too, the imagination plays an important role in helping us to see a kind of systematic connection between the artistic *methods* and philosophical forms characteristic of idealism.

On Schiller’s view,<sup>71</sup> at the heart of an aesthetic education is the artistic power of the reason characterizable as a free lawfulness of the imagination and the “free play” of thought that it makes possible. This reflection is directly traceable to Kant’s principle of the third *Critique*. It is “only insofar as she secures for the intellectual faculties [*den Denkkraften*] the freedom to express themselves according to their own laws, that Beauty can become a means of leading Man from matter to form, from perception to principles, from a limited to an absolute existence [*absoluten Dasein*].”<sup>72</sup> For Schiller it is the determinate aesthetic existence of an individual that unites the two opposing forms of necessity; that is, the rational lawfulness of “logic and morals” must be brought into accord with the sensuous lawfulness of the “physical” through an active, aesthetic life.

In the “Twentieth Letter,” Schiller argues that the “developing” or “approximation of the ideal of aesthetic purity” brings together the two opposing forms of lawfulness (that of reason and that of nature) and results in “freedom”<sup>73</sup>: “Both systems of law [*Beide Gesetzgebungen*: “Reason/*Vernunft*” and “Nature”] should subsist in complete independence, yet in complete accord [*einig*] with one another,”<sup>74</sup> and this accord is achieved through the beautiful. So, we find an inheritance of a Kantian aesthetic “free play” [*freien Spiels*],<sup>75</sup> a free unity of opposing forms of lawfulness (of

<sup>69</sup> Schlegel 1971, p. 283.

<sup>70</sup> For a similar account, see Nassar 2014b, pp. 259, 77–8. For a contrasting view, see Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 1997; cf. Frederick Beiser, “Romanticism and Idealism,” 2014, and Dieter Henrich, *Konstellationen*, 1991.

<sup>71</sup> Brady Bowman 2014, pp. 152–4. <sup>72</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XIX.

<sup>73</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XIX. <sup>74</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XXIV.

<sup>75</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XXVII.

reason and nature) as the beautiful in an individual; and the “effect of the beautiful is freedom.”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, for Schiller, it is the “free movement” of the imagination and its “free form”<sup>77</sup> that “makes the leap to aesthetic play”<sup>78</sup> possible and thereby gives rise to freedom and the unity of the “systems of law.”<sup>79</sup> In short, Schiller’s notion of aesthetic education as the consummation of philosophy in human existence takes precisely the free lawful power of the imagination as that structure whereby a dynamic unity of reason and nature becomes one’s own self-recognized life, which is reminiscent of Schlegel’s ideal of the “art of living.”

### 3.8. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Perhaps the subtlest and most nuanced variant of romanticism (broadly construed), Goethe’s alternative to something like the Idealist’s absolute is a notion of a certain kind of *geistliche Freiheit*,<sup>80</sup> a *Tätigkeit* or activity of the fullest kind, of which one could say, “und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt / Geprägte Form, die Lebend sich entwickelt.”<sup>81</sup> This notion of *Tätigkeit* is not a question of perfection. Instead, and not unlike Hegel’s notion of true unity in the absolute, it is an activity of a unified self in nature. That unified, dynamic activity of the self is the resulting state of a specific kind of *Bildung*. We might call it Goethean *Bildung*.<sup>82</sup> The structure of Goethe’s *Bildung* is one in which laws are derived through broadly scientific reflection on nature,<sup>83</sup> while the breath of life<sup>84</sup> is given through the fine arts, that is, the formative power of the imagination: the creative activity of one’s spirit.<sup>85</sup> These two activities of the rational self (scientific reflection and artistic formation) must be unified in a cultivated,

<sup>76</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XXII.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Herder on imagination in his *Critical Forests*, 2006, pp. 211, 190.

<sup>78</sup> Schiller, 2004, Letter XXVII.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Novalis on the Imagination in his *Fichte-Studien*, Group II:218–26; for his account of the “productive imagination” as the capacity for freedom and its relation to harmony, see Group V:555. Cf. Nassar 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Where this means the spiritual freedom of one living fully in a Goethean sense.

<sup>81</sup> [nor any time nor any power can shatter / imprinted form informing living matter]: This is a line from Goethe’s poem *Urworte, Orphisch*, 1994, pp. 122–3.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Wellbery, “Goethes Pandora: Dramatisierung einer Urgeschichte der Moderne,” 2017, pp. 43–5, 59–60.

<sup>83</sup> “und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben” [and only law is freedom’s sure foundation], from his poem *Natur und Kunst*, 1994, 82–3; for more on this, see Goethe’s *Italienische Reise*; cf. Goethe, *Weltseele*, and *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen*; Förster 2012, ch. 11; and Wellbery 2017, pp. 4–31.

<sup>84</sup> Or, in Goethe’s words, “breathing [the artist’s own] spirit into them,” 1994, p. 165.

<sup>85</sup> Consider, for instance, Goethe’s account of fine art in his 1798 Introduction to the *Propylaea*, 1994, pp. 88–9, as well as his 1817 essay “Stages of Man’s Mind,” 1994, pp. 203–4.

single activity to be true spiritual freedom. This should not be taken to imply perfection, but rather an unending development and activity.<sup>86</sup>

Goethe's notion of such a free lawful unity – a unity of reason's lawfulness and formative power – bears much in common with Kant's principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination. This principle of the imagination is not only at the heart of the aesthetic free play in judgments of the beautiful, for Kant, but also the principle grounding the “harmony”<sup>87</sup> yet “felt” contrapurposiveness<sup>88</sup> between reason and the imagination in judgments of the sublime.<sup>89</sup> Goethe picks up on precisely this “failure of the imagination” in the sublime and employs it in his own poetic structure (e.g., in “Harzreise im Winter”) and in his account of *Bildung*.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Goethe's account of intuitive understanding in his philosophy of nature and botany, which was influenced by the third *Critique*, places the imagination at the fore.<sup>91</sup> But above all, it is the imagination's role in the formative power of the artist (broadly construed to include a way of life) that makes possible the Goethean *Bildung* and the resulting dynamic form of *Tätigkeit* of an individual living fully and well.

What is perhaps most surprising is that despite its centrality to the accounts of the Romantics, the proofs and conclusions of the Idealists, and the critical Idealism of Kant, the imagination has remained on the periphery of scholarship over the last hundred years. This volume seeks to contribute to the reversal of that trend by highlighting not only its significances for each of these major figures but also the nature of those significances in a way that will help identify why a careful account of the imagination must be at the core of any interpretation of these closely related philosophical movements.

### 3.9. *A Philosophical Worry and One Hundred Years of Silence*

Aside from some exceptions in scholarship on German Romanticism,<sup>92</sup> the past century has displayed widespread skepticism toward any serious significance of the imagination for something like a transcendental logic or a philosophical program. This one-sidedness bears both the positive and

<sup>86</sup> For an in-depth account of these two sources of Goethean *Bildung*, see Georginna Hinnebusch's dissertation, “A Philosophy to Live By: Goethe's Art of Living in the Spirit of the Ancients.”

<sup>87</sup> *KU* 5:258. <sup>88</sup> Kant terms this a “contrapurposive,” *KU* 5:244–5. <sup>89</sup> *KU* 5:259.

<sup>90</sup> For more on Goethe's inheritance of Kant's conception of the imagination and the sublime, as well as Goethe's departure from Kant, see Wellbery, *The Specular Moment*, pp. 390–2.

<sup>91</sup> For more on the difference between Kant, Goethe, and the intuitive understanding, see Förster 2012, ch. 11, and Nassar 2014a, ch. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Ameriks 2014, pp. 47–67; this is a view he furthered in his talk for the *Society for German Idealism and Romanticism* on the *Imagination*.

negative marks of the analytic turn in philosophy. It is telling that for one hundred years, from the time of G. E. Moore, Gottlob Frege, and Bertrand Russell through the first decade of the twenty-first century, critics and advocates alike have, by default, couched their accounts in terms of categories, laws, structure, form, logic, entailment, and determination, by-and-large passing over the less mathematically and analytically receptive terms such as productivity, creation, artistic representation and formation, freedom of reflection, spontaneity, heteronomy, and growth. Yet these latter terms are a vital portion of the hylomorphic picture of reason for Kant, the post-Kantian Idealists, and the Romantics. Terms of lawfulness and form are meaningless without the free activity and causality necessary in and for content (even the largely empty, representational symbols in logical form).<sup>93</sup> But free play, production, and formation do not fit easily into rigid mathematical categories and numerical models of thought, which characterizes much of post-Fregean philosophy.

The imagination is arguably that structural feature of reason necessary (according to Kant, the Idealists, and the Romantics) to account for such productive freedom and the arising of any conceptual content (even empty representational concepts or categories). Sanitization of Idealism from the imagination, then, is bound to result in accounts that are as problematically one-sided as those on the opposite side (e.g. Heidegger's<sup>94</sup> account or the kinds critiqued by Friedman and Ameriks),<sup>95</sup> which reduce everything to the creation of some solipsistic mind.

Our aim, I suggest, should be the middle road in which we take seriously the possible systematic significance(s) of the imagination along with those standardly emphasized features in Kant and the German Idealist's philosophical systems. This, in turn, will pave the way for more sympathetic and rigorous interpretations and integrations of the philosophical contributions of Romanticism.

#### 4. Overview of Contributions to this Volume

This volume is divided into three movements. The first traces the significances of the imagination in Kant's critical philosophy (Chapters 1–4), the second explores the imagination in post-Kantian German Idealism

<sup>93</sup> This view is not at odds with accounts that argue that the "idea of lawfulness marks the center of the space of reason described by Kant's theory of normativity" (Pollok 2017, p. 307). It merely picks out the other necessary component to that very centrality of lawfulness.

<sup>94</sup> Heidegger, *Kant*, pp. 144, 141; *KRV* A124.

<sup>95</sup> Friedman 1996, p. 464; Ameriks 2014, pp. 52–4.

(Chapters 5–7), and the third draws out the imagination as a cornerstone of German Romanticism (Chapters 8–11).

#### 4.1. *Kant and the Imagination*

Chapter 1 – Clinton Tolley divides accounts of the imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* into two camps. He identifies these camps with the terms “minimizing” and “maximizing” readings, which aim to differentiate non-conceptualist accounts of intuitions from more broadly conceptualist-leaning accounts. The former includes those for whom the imagination has no role in producing intuitions as objects of experience. The latter includes those for whom the imagination is necessary for the production of intuitions, where intuitions have some conceptual structure and so are possible objects of experience. Against both camps, Tolley suggests a view of the imagination as neither necessary for the production of intuitions nor as separable from the process of yielding objects of experience. According to Tolley, although the imagination does not yield intuitions, it does synthesize intuitions into perceptions as objects of experience and so is an active part of an empirical consciousness. Moreover, according to Tolley, the imagination necessarily remains separate from the understanding. In short, Tolley defends a view of the imagination as “only” a function in sensibility of an “empirical consciousness,” which, however, does not yield intuitions, but rather mediates by synthesizing intuitions into perceptions.

Chapter 2 – By contrast with Tolley’s account of the imagination, in which it is kept separate from both the understanding and the yielding of intuitions, Tobias Rosefeldt argues that the imagination is for Kant not only a function that necessarily precedes the production of intuitions but also a feature of the understanding itself. Rosefeldt focuses his account on Kant’s transcendental imagination and the figurative synthesis. He suggests that we should interpret the transcendental imagination as a function of the understanding, where it is a feature of the latter and not something separate. That is, the imagination is the understanding’s ability to produce for the mind an analog to physical movement in space. While looking to the role of the imagination for the pure intuitions of space and time, Rosefeldt takes up a close investigation of the significance of the transcendental imagination and the pure, inner intuition of time. In this analysis, Rosefeldt pays particular attention to the importance of recognizing the imagination as the preceding source of synthesis. Ultimately, on Rosefeldt’s account, space and time, as the pure forms of sense, necessarily presuppose the synthetic activity for which the imagination is responsible.



As such, on his view, the imagination is a productive, synthetic function of the understanding that is necessary for the pure forms of sensibility as well as the empirical intuitions given thereby.

Chapter 3 – Günter Zöllner's account of the productive function of the imagination in the first *Critique* is expansive. Differing from Rosefeldt's closer alignment of the imagination with the understanding, Zöllner emphasizes an equally vital alignment with sensibility. He offers a functionalist account of the imagination in which it serves a unifying role at the heart of Kant's dualism of sensibility and the understanding. This unifying function is what makes possible the very dualism of discursive reason. Without it, sensibility would be blind and the understanding would be empty. On Zöllner's view, the imagination neither undermines nor overcomes the dualism of theoretical cognition but is rather an essential ingredient for the possibility of cognition and so is a vital part of what makes Kant's dualism possible. Moreover, it is through such an analysis of the imagination's productive, unifying function that we can clearly "rule out an empiricist understanding of matter as sheer sensory data" as well as the possibility of "tracking all cognitive form to logical formation." The imagination, on Zöllner's view, is ultimately a function internal to both understanding and sensibility and also that by which they are related. Importantly, the imagination is not thereby a reducible common core of the understanding and sensibility. In short, it is the power to unify sensibility and understanding. This unity is not some third element, external to sensibility and understanding, but is rather a necessary, internal quality of the function of both in theoretical cognition.

Chapter 4 – Similarly to Zöllner, Keren Gorodeisky offers an account of the imagination as a productive source of unity. Where Zöllner's account focuses on the internality of the imagination to both the understanding and sensibility in the first *Critique*, however, Gorodeisky argues that the imagination serves an analog role in all three of the "higher" faculties of the mind corresponding to theoretical reason, practical reason, and the power of judgment. Gorodeisky's account of this internal role similarly traces a relationship between the intellect and lawfulness, on the one hand, and the sensible representation, on the other. The imagination, on her view, is that through which these three faculties display a unity while retaining their differences. Gorodeisky emphasizes that the imagination is neither some reducible core, nor does it allow for the collapse of the three forms of reason into one. Instead, it is that through which each form of reason is capable of representing a unity of intellect and sense, whether in determining judgments or in free lawful reflection. The imagination is thus vital, on

Gorodeisky's interpretation, to Kant's account of reason in general. It is in this way that the imagination is fundamental to what it is to be discursive, practical, aesthetically reflective, rational animals.

#### 4.2. *The Imagination in Post-Kantian German Idealism*

Chapter 5 – Johannes Haag takes up Fichte's attempt, following Kant, to ground the objectivity of objects of experience. Haag argues that a fundamental requirement for Kant's critical idealism and any form of transcendental Idealism is the grounding of the objectivity of objects of experience given that the laws of reason are a feature of the judging subject. Fichte's answer to this problem is the imagination. While this solution appears at first blush either as trivial or as worsening the problem by reducing everything "objective" to the subjective sphere, Haag argues that such a glossing is a poor reading of Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre*. Rather, Fichte's way of employing the imagination to solve the problem of objectivity offers interesting possibilities for meeting this fundamental requirement without becoming alien to the "spirit" of Kantian Idealism.

Chapter 6 – Meghant Sudan argues that both Kant's and Hegel's Idealisms employ the imagination as a mediator between the sensible and conceptual domains of reason in an effort to combat the twin threats of empirical and rational psychology. On Sudan's view, such a reformulation of Hegel's Encyclopedic system is necessary to save it from the "obscurity" into which Hegel's own means of articulation had cast it. Sudan argues that Kant's use of the imagination as a productive source of synthesis becomes the, albeit reworked, core of Hegel's absolute idealism. Recognition of this Kantian root is, on Sudan's view, important for casting Hegel's Idealism in a more tenable light.

Chapter 7 – Gerad Gentry argues that a Kantian principle of the imagination plays a pivotal role in Hegel's grounding of absolute idealism in the *Logic*. Gentry draws together Hegel's praise for Kant's third-*Critique* principle of the imagination with Hegel's more cautious reception of the first-*Critique* imagination. The former becomes, for Hegel, a positive articulation of the method of speculative thought and "Kant's greatest service to philosophy." Moreover, Hegel identifies this principle in his final transition in his *Science of Logic* at precisely the place where the Logic transitions from critical to absolute idealism. Understanding the significance of this moment in the Logic depends on our maintaining the systematic distinction between Hegel's Philosophy of Nature and the Logic. Hegel's concept of purposiveness can appear like an idea of real

teleology (whether Kantian or Aristotelian). It is not. Instead, Hegel's adoption of the free lawfulness of the imagination is at the heart of his *logic* of the *idea* of life. The free lawfulness of the imagination given first by Kant appears in Hegel's system as the very logical structure by which absolute reason grounds itself as a dialectically self-determining movement.

#### 4.3. *The Imagination in German Romanticism*

Chapter 8 – Michael Forster parses the role of the imagination for Herder's conception of interpretation. *Einfühlung*, the capacity for “feeling one's way into” an other's perspective, is for Herder fundamental to interpretation. Forster argues that, on Herder's view, there is a gulf not merely between oneself and a text but also the socio-historical context. On Herder's view, the unique context that defines this gap and so sets the requirements for meaningful interpretation includes geographical, cultural, political, natural-phenomena, and concerns for the philosophical thought of the time. The ability adequately to sympathize with this context and empathize with the movements of the time are requisit for rich interpretation. It is here, Forster argues, that the imagination makes possible that capacity for *Einfühlung* and, thereby, meaningful interpretation across time. The imagination is key here because, while one cannot actually attain the feelings or thought that contextualized the object of interpretation, nevertheless, the imagination makes possible a recapturing that is a vital approximation grounding rich interpretation.

Chapter 9 – Closely related to Forster's argument,<sup>96</sup> Kristin Gjesdal draws out a particular hermeneutical conversation starting with the Romantics and leading to Gadamer's critique of them. Gjesdal argues that Gadamer's account of shared-tradition in his hermeneutics is his attempt to remedy a problematic divide between the “I” and the “Thou” visible in the work of some of the Romantics, such as Schleiermacher. Against Gadamer's critique of Schleiermacher's supposed chasm between the I and the Thou, Gjesdal argues that while Schleiermacher's hermeneutics holds such a distinction as fundamental, it does not reflect the influence of Kant's third *Critique* so much as it does the hermeneutics of Herder. Gjesdal's suggestion is that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is philosophically more compelling than Gadamer's framing of it allows. This philosophically tenable account rests on a retrieval (from Gadamer's critique) of the imagination as a necessary quality of good hermeneutics. On this restorative account of the imagination, it is repurposed as a “sympathetic

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Anne Pollok 2016.

imagination.” Ultimately, on Gjesdal’s view, the sympathetic imagination in Schleiermacher stems from Herder’s conception of the “mutual dependence” of the imagination, sympathy, and understanding. Schleiermacher, on Gjesdal’s account, like Herder on Forster’s account, takes the imagination to be that capacity by which we sympathetically “feel” our way into the perspective of another. This hermeneutical need is grounded in a kind of mutual dependence with understanding. In this way the imagination is fundamental to dynamic, sympathetic understanding of an other.

Chapter 10 – Elizabeth Millán Brusslan looks to the imagination as the source of the poetic and aesthetic work of the Romantics and to the Idealism of Fichte as an inspiration to the former. She argues that the imagination is a central feature whereby the Romantics seek to draw poetry and philosophy into a unity while embracing a freer, non-foundationalist approach that contrasts with Fichte’s use of art and the imagination for a system of certitude. Millán Brusslan develops a particularly lucid view of art and imagination in philosophy as expressed by Schopenhauer. In particular, she highlights the idea that art brings the power of imagination into play in a manner that is essential to philosophy. Further, Millán Brusslan argues that this sheds light not only on the philosophy of the Romantics, but also on Fichte’s Idealism.

Chapter 11 – In the concluding chapter of the volume, Allen Speight paints one of Schlegel’s most important insights for Hegel, in which the ethical, social, and political worlds are envisaged into a system of art, religion, and philosophy. This new or re-envisaging was simultaneously a “tendency of the age,” yet also, philosophically, a recognition of “how art as an imaginative and interpretive activity matters.” Speight argues that the imagination, as this artistic function, is as pivotal for our contemporary thought as Hegel and Schlegel took it to be in their own post-Kantian age. The imagination’s artistic significance remains, for us, a vital method of opening up new possibilities for understanding, for reflecting and engaging in religion and philosophy, in social life, and in ethics.



# *Kant on the Role of the Imagination (and Images) in the Transition from Intuition to Experience*

Clinton Tolley

## 1. Imagination between Intuition and Experience?

My aim is to clarify the role that Kant thinks the “power of the imagination [Einbildungskraft]” has to play in the constitution of what Kant calls “experience [Erfahrung].” Most readers interested in Kant’s account of experience have focused primarily on the contributions of “sense [Sinn]” and “understanding [Verstand]” – and in particular their acts of “intuition [Anschauung]” and “thinking [denken],” respectively – to the formation of experience as an “empirical cognition [Erkenntnis]” of an object (cf. B165–6). Yet, it would be hard to deny that Kant also means to accord some role to the imagination and its paradigmatic activity of “synthesis” in the formation of experience as well. The imagination shows up right at the outset of the first *Critique*’s treatment of the conditions for the possibility of experience in the “Transcendental Analytic” (cf. B103) and then returns throughout the “Analytic of Concepts,” especially in the “Transcendental Deduction” in Kant’s exposition of the various mental activities (and contents) that must be involved for the act of experience itself to be possible (cf. A94, A97, A100, A115, A119–20; B151–6). The A-edition claims quite explicitly that

the two outer extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected together [zusammenhängen] by a transcendental function of the imagination, since otherwise appearances would surely be given, but no objects of an empirical cognition, and hence no experience. (A124)

The same sort of “connecting” role is ascribed to the imagination later in the “Analytic of Principles,” where Kant is concerned to present the specific rules according to which the understanding “applies” its concepts to what is given in intuition (appearances) to make experience possible (cf. B176–7). Here Kant singles out “schemata” as needed to mediate this application, mediating items that themselves are “always only products of the imagination” (B179).

Even so, Kant's readers have recently been of several minds about how best to understand this mediating role for the imagination in experience. Interestingly, two of the most common recent trends in interpretation seem to point in opposite directions. On the one hand, there are those who – despite the textual evidence mentioned above – seek to minimize or even eliminate any role for the imagination to play in the formation of experience. This “minimizing” reading is often motivated by the philosophical worry that any attempt to incorporate the imagination – and especially, what one might expect would be its signature products: “images [Bilder]” – would leave Kant with an overly “representationalist” or “indirect” model of experience, since it would seem to imply that something image-like mediates between our minds and the objects of experience (bodies and our own soul).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there are those who seek instead to situate the role of the imagination at the very earliest steps of the constitution of experience, such that its activity (e.g., of “figurative synthesis”) is said to be at work already in the mere *having* of an intuition in the first place. Many of these latter “maximizing” interpreters are motivated by (post-Sellarsian) philosophical worries that something “conceptual” or at least “intellectual” (i.e., involving our understanding)<sup>2</sup> must already be incorporated at the level of intuition if Kant is to have a coherent account of how empirical cognition of bodies and our own soul, on the basis of intuition, could ever be possible. This expansion of the role of the imagination into the original production of intuition is thus often coupled with an argument for the ultimate identification of the activity of the imagination with a certain use of the understanding, an identification that (these readers often claim) Kant himself eventually affirms in the B-edition of the *Critique*.<sup>3</sup> And even some of those who mean to embrace a variety of non-conceptualism (or non-intellectualism) about intuition have found it hard not to accept that synthesis of the imagination is required for intuition to come about.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare Young 1988; Collins 1999; Gomes 2014; Allais 2015: 104f; McLear 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Compare McLear's use of “conceptualist” and “intellectualist” in McLear 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Waxman 1991; Engstrom 2006: 17; Ginsborg 2008; Grüne 2009; Williams 2012, 2018; Gomes 2014. See also the contributions in this volume by Gentry and Zöller for alternate proposals concerning the inseparability of imagination from both understanding and sensibility.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Hanna 2005 and Allais 2009. (Allais has since shifted her position on intuition itself so as not to require even the synthesis of the imagination; cf. Allais 2015: 147ff, 2017.) Others sympathetic to non-conceptualist interpretations have remained largely silent on the imagination; compare Watkins 2008.

In this chapter I will argue against both of these interpretations and will begin to develop an alternate account of imagination in experience.<sup>5</sup> Against those who minimize imagination's role, I will highlight the distinctive contribution of the imagination to experience. In particular, I will foreground the specific role that the imagination plays in making possible the distinct mental act, intermediate between intuition and experience, that Kant calls "*perception* [Wahrnehmung]" as the "*empirical consciousness* [Bewußtsein]" of appearances (cf. B207).<sup>6</sup> Because perception involves images essentially (cf. A120), and because Kant understands *experience* itself to be a "synthesis of perceptions" (cf. B218), this strongly suggests (against minimalists) that experience, too, will incorporate images into the manner in which it allows us to cognize physical objects.<sup>7</sup>

By highlighting the contribution of imagination prior to experience, my own account, therefore, overlaps in part with the readings that seek instead to maximize the role of imagination. Against maximalists, however, I will argue that imagination contributes *only* in (and after) the transition from intuition to perception, rather than already being at work in the stage of intuition itself. More specifically, I will argue that Kant takes the activity of imagination to make perception possible by acting on *already-formed* intuitions in order to bring about the *consciousness* of them, rather than to bring the intuitions about in the first place. I will also argue that this synthesis of intuitions should be kept distinct from the activity of understanding.

I will proceed as follows. I will start by focusing on Kant's first extended discussion of the imagination in the early sections of the A-edition's "Analytic of Concepts" (Section 2). I will then turn to Kant's fuller treatment of the imagination and its "synthesis" in the course of the "Transcendental Deduction," both in the A-edition (Section 3) and the B-edition versions (Section 4). This will then let us foreground the way in

<sup>5</sup> The account developed below bears some affinity to the spirit (if not exactly the letter) of Sellars' own interpretation; cf. Sellars 1968; see also the brief but helpful Pendlebury 1996. For more comprehensive analyses of Kant's views on images in particular, see Matherne 2015 and Tracz (in progress).

<sup>6</sup> For more on perception and its distinctness from both intuition and experience, see Tolley 2013, 2016, 2017, and forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> On the relation between images and perception, compare Matherne 2015. I should say up front that I do not mean to claim that direct realist interpreters cannot provide their own alternative analysis of experience that would somehow incorporate the imagination and images. Foremost, I mean to challenge these interpreters to show positively how their view can be made to be consistent with this aspect of Kant's views.



which these acts of imagination make possible what Kant calls “perception,” understood as the “empirical consciousness” of what is given in intuition, and will also allow us to begin to articulate Kant’s doctrine of images and their function in perception as well (Section 5). This will set up further investigation of how the imagination and images figure into the step from perception to experience itself (Section 6). This will also provide sufficient resources for giving an alternative reading of certain passages from the B-edition that have most consistently provided motivation for the “maximizing” interpretation of imagination (and understanding) as being already responsible for the production of intuition itself, and in particular the “*pure* intuitions” of space and time (Section 7).

## **2. Imagination between Sense and Understanding: An Introduction**

Readers of Kant rightly look to his familiar distinction between sensibility and understanding to provide something of an anchor-point to help get their bearings with Kant’s wide-ranging technical terminology in his critical writings. This distinction helps give orientation to the large-scale structure of the first *Critique* itself (the “Aesthetic” versus the “Logic”; B76). It is encountered on the very first page of the main body – in both editions – precisely in connection with the contribution of each in the bringing about of experience (cf. A1; B1) – and encountered again at the outset of both the Aesthetic and the Logic, again with respect to their respective contributions to “cognition” (B33; B74–5). In each of these early passages, Kant seems to articulate a relatively straightforward two-step picture of what is required for cognition and for “experience” as “empirical cognition” in particular: first, sensibility “receives” representations (“sensations,” “intuitions”) of objects; then, the understanding cognizes these objects by “thinking” of the objects in relation to these representations, using “concepts.”

Even so, shortly into the Logic itself, particularly as the concept of experience (empirical cognition) begins to take a more central stage, Kant begins to articulate a more complicated view of the transition from sensibility and its representations to cognition and the understanding. In the lead-up to the Deduction, Kant introduces two further capacities as also playing a key role in making empirical cognition possible – namely, the “power of imagination [Einbildungskraft]” and “apperception” – with each making their distinct contributions to the process of cognition.

In the sections that mean to provide the “clue [Leitfaden]” to the Deduction, sections Kant left largely unrevised from the first edition (A76f/B102f), Kant describes “what we have to attend to if we wish to judge about the first origin [Ursprung] of cognition” (B103). After reminding us of the “manifold” of representations of sensibility and “the conditions of the receptivity of our mind, under which alone it can receive representations of objects,” Kant then notes that “the spontaneity of our thought requires that this manifold must *first* be gone through, taken up [aufgenommen], and combined [verbunden], in order for a cognition to be made out of it” (B102; my ital.). “Synthesis” is now given as the name for this “activity [Handlung]” that precedes the making of a cognition out of the manifold given in sense (B102), and “synthesis in general [überhaupt]” is here assigned to “the power of imagination,” as its “mere effect [Wirkung],” due to a “blind though indispensable function of the soul” (B103). Synthesis by the imagination is here identified only as a necessary precondition for cognition, one not sufficient on its own to “yield cognition”; in fact, “we are seldom ever conscious [bewußt]” of its activity (B103). Instead, that “by means of which” the mind is “*first* provided cognition in the proper sense” is not mere synthesis, but rather the act of “bringing this synthesis *to concepts*,” which is itself “a function that pertains to the *understanding*” (B103; my ital.; cf. B104).

A still more complex picture is foregrounded in the A-edition introduction to the Deduction itself. Here Kant clearly identifies *three* “capacities [Fähigkeiten oder Vermögen]” besides understanding as the “original sources [Quellen]” of experience (empirical cognition): “*sense*, the *power of imagination*, and *apperception*” (A94). Strikingly, Kant here also claims that these three capacities themselves “cannot be derived [abgeleitet] from any other capacity of the mind” (A94) – presumably also meaning that they cannot be derived from one another either. Kant then assigns to each capacity something that “is grounded [gründet sich]” on it: “the *synopsis* of the manifold *a priori*” is grounded on sense; on imagination, “the *synthesis* of this manifold”; and on what Kant singles out as “*original* [ursprüngliche] apperception,” “the *unity* [Einheit] of this synthesis” (A94). A few pages later, Kant calls these the “three subjective sources of cognition,” which in fact “*make possible the understanding* [Verstand] itself, and through this, *all experience*, as an empirical product of the understanding” (A97–8; my ital.).

What emerges, then, is the following *four*-step account of experience: *sense* gives a “manifold” of representations; *imagination* performs a

“synthesis” of this manifold (B103); *apperception* brings about the “consciousness” that arises through this process (B131f); and only then can the *understanding* achieve a final “cognition” of an object by way of ensuring that the foregoing is “brought to concepts” (cf. B102–5).

### 3. Synthesis as the Activity of the Imagination: The A-Deduction

We can now turn more directly to the consideration of the A-Deduction’s more detailed account of the synthesis of the imagination in particular. The A-Deduction begins by repeating a basic thought from the *Leitfaden* about the dependence of imagination on sense: Whatever activity (synthesis) the imagination is capable of, it will be something that itself presupposes that a manifold has already been “given” to the mind and is “contained” in it, ready to be synthesized. Kant marks this fact here by claiming that the “receiving” and the “containing” together of a manifold by sense is *not* the result of “synthesis” at all, but instead of what Kant calls “*synopsis*” (A97; cf. A94).

To be sure, mere synopsis is even less sufficient for “anything like cognition to arise”; instead, “*receptivity* can make cognitions possible only if combined [verbunden] with *spontaneity*” in such a way that what results is no longer just a manifold merely present together in sense but otherwise “isolated,” “separated,” and “foreign” from one another, but rather “a whole [Ganzes] of compared [verglichenen] and connected [verknüpfter] representations” (A97). It is this “spontaneity” that Kant sees as “the ground of a *threefold* synthesis.” The first two “syntheses” are again assigned to the imagination: the synthesis of “*apprehension*” of the representations present in intuition and the synthesis of “*reproduction*” of these representations into subsequent representations.<sup>8</sup> Beyond these, however, a third “synthesis” is necessary to yield “*recognition*” – or, more simply: “*cognition*,” as he puts it later (A104) – namely, a synthesis involving the use of a “concept” (A97).

This suggests that at least some synthesis is performed by the understanding. What is more, Kant here claims that one and the same “spontaneity” of the mind is the ground of all three syntheses. This might be taken to imply, despite appearances to the contrary, that one and the same

<sup>8</sup> The second synthesis is here assigned explicitly to the imagination (A97), and a bit later, Kant repeats the claim that “apprehension,” too, is the work of “the active [tätiges] capacity of the synthesis of this manifold, which we call the power of imagination” (A120).

*capacity* must be responsible for all three syntheses. What is crucial to note at this point, however, is that it is the spontaneity of mind *in general* that is said to ground all of these syntheses, and not a spontaneity that is limited to any one *particular capacity*. In particular, this need not imply that the spontaneity specific to the third sort of synthesis – namely, what Kant has already called earlier “the spontaneity of our *thinking*” (B102), “the spontaneity of *concepts*,” and “the spontaneity of *cognition*” in particular (B75), all of which he has already assigned to the understanding – is what serves as the “ground” of all of the other syntheses. The reference to spontaneity as such, as what grounds for all three syntheses, instead leaves open that it is a spontaneity that pertains to the power of imagination on its own.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the A-edition introduction to the Deduction seems to imply just this reading – namely, that it is both the receptivity of sense and a more original spontaneity that instead “makes possible” the understanding, precisely by performing the earlier syntheses associated explicitly with the *imagination* (A97; cf. A115). Rather than the understanding being the agent of *this* spontaneous activity, it would seem instead to be its consequent.

It is this more complex picture that is repeated toward the end of the A-deduction, where Kant gives a nice overview of the progression toward experience as empirical cognition “by beginning from beneath, namely with what is empirical” (A119f). Here Kant again begins with sense: “the first thing that is given to us is appearance” (A119–20). Yet, since “every appearance contains a manifold,” “a combination [Verbindung]” of this manifold “is necessary,” and since the manifold “cannot have this in sense itself,” we must turn first to “an active [tätiges] capacity of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call the power of imagination, and whose action . . . I call apprehension” (A120). Imaginative synthesis kicks off the mind’s engaging in “first a running through [Durchlaufen] and then a taking together [Zusammennehmung] of this manifold” – an “action” here said to be “directly directed at intuition [gerade zu auf die Anschauung

<sup>9</sup> Compare Kant’s later claim that both the synthesis of apprehension and that of concepts are the work of the same “spontaneity”: “It is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of the power of imagination and here under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition” (B162n). Note that “spontaneity” is Kant’s name for the feature common to both imagination and understanding, and *not* “understanding.” I emphasize the broader scope of spontaneity because it is common to think that Kant assigns all spontaneity and all synthesis to the understanding. The broader scope of spontaneity, however, follows from Kant’s willingness to ascribe it even to “spiritualized” marionettes (*automata spirituale*) (5:97, 101), natural organisms (5:411; 20:235), and everything living (cf. 17:592), even though these categories include beings that don’t possess understanding at all.

gerichtet],” though it is not something that intuition itself “can effect [bewirken]” (A99). Cognition of objects, however, requires not just a one-off apprehension, or even a series of apprehendings, but also a second capacity for “calling back [rufen]” what has been apprehended so that it can be “taken together”; for this “calling back,” Kant identifies the second, “*reproductive* capacity of the power of imagination,” which is also responsible for the ensuing “association” of parts of the manifold with others (A121; my ital.). This second act is the synthesis by means of which

representations that have often followed [gefolgt] or accompanied [begleitet] one another are finally associated [vergesellschaften] with each other and thereby placed in a connection [Verknüpfung] in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition [Übergang] of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule. (A100)

The imagination, then, is also what is responsible both for “associating” (“connecting”) representations together and then for bringing back associated representations, even in the absence of their objects. Even apprehension with reproduction, however, is not sufficient to achieve cognition of objects. The final “ground” of achieving the “*recognition* of the manifold” that is constitutive of empirical *cognition* itself (as “experience”) lies not in any of these acts of imagination, but rather in an act that involves the “concepts” or “categories” of understanding (A125).<sup>10</sup> The result of the merely imaginative syntheses (the “taking together,” reproducing, associating of sensations) is thus not yet an experience – though it is also not merely an intuition (this has already been accomplished by “synopsis”).

#### 4. The Synthesis of the Imagination and the “Combination” of Understanding: The B-Deduction

In the B-edition Deduction, the independence of imagination can seem to be severely diminished if not extinguished altogether. More specifically, the new edition can be (and has frequently been) taken to suggest that Kant ultimately decides in favor of viewing the imagination as part of the understanding.<sup>11</sup> For one thing, Kant chooses not to include the explicit

<sup>10</sup> “Actual experience . . . consists in the apprehension, the association (the reproduction), and finally the recognition of the appearances” (A124).

<sup>11</sup> For those who take Kant to identify the imagination and the understanding in the B-edition, see the initial footnotes above, and also Kitcher 1990; Allison 2004.

fourfold differentiation of sense, imagination, apperception, and understanding at the outset of the new edition of the Deduction proper. What is more, though Kant does start the B-deduction by picking up on the Leitfaden's earlier threefold distinction between the manifold, the synthesis, and the unity of the synthesis, the activity of synthesis itself is now no longer straightaway ascribed to the power of the imagination (B129–30). Though the manifold is still assigned to “the senses” (B129), and though the unity of the synthesis is assigned to “consciousness” (cf. B131n), synthesis itself is now characterized initially more generally as “an act of spontaneity of the power of *representation* [Vorstellungskraft].” Shortly thereafter, and even more strikingly, synthesis itself seems to be then characterized as something that “*must* be called understanding,” such that “*all* combination [Verbindung], whether it is the combination of the manifold in intuition or of concepts” is “an act of understanding [Verstandeshandlung]” (B130; my ital.). Conversely, once imagination is finally introduced by name much later in the Deduction, its “transcendental synthesis” is said to be “an effect of the understanding” (B152).

In light of such apparent contrasts with the A-edition, it is understandable that the B-Deduction might be read as involving a change of mind on Kant's part. Once we move further into the B-Deduction, however, clear continuities come to the fore. For when Kant finally does speak directly about the imagination, he actually begins by claiming that “the power of imagination” itself “belongs to *sensibility*” (B151). And while it is surely true that the B-edition does not focus so much on what the power of imagination contributes to *empirical* cognition (experience) – rather than as to its ability to be “determined” *a priori* by the understanding in “transcendental synthesis,” so as to allow for *synthetic a priori* cognition (cf. Section 7) – such contributions do receive some mention. For one, Kant continues to refer to the activities of “association” and “reproduction” as distinct from those of the understanding and as *sui generis* to the power of the imagination (B152). Later in a footnote, Kant likewise separates out two moments of “one and the same spontaneity” that both contribute to cognition: one that receives “the name of power of imagination” and is responsible for “the synthesis of apprehension,” another that receives “the name of understanding” and is responsible for “the synthesis of apperception which is intellectual and is contained entirely *a priori* in the categories” (B162n). Here, then, as in the A-Deduction, the imagination is responsible for the syntheses of apprehension, association, and reproduction, while the understanding is responsible only for synthesis involving concepts (categories).

In fact, throughout the rest of the B-edition, the imagination/understanding distinction continues to be upheld – as it does in all of Kant’s later writings. The entire Schematism, for example, presents the imagination as a distinct capacity that must mediate between sensibility and understanding as something “through” which the understanding is able to achieve a rule for application of its categories (cf. B185). Later in the Principles, the imagination and its synthesis continue to be consistently contrasted with the “determination” of this synthesis by apperception or the concepts of the understanding (B194; B234; B257). In a part common to both editions of the later chapter on Phenomena and Noumena (despite revising other parts), Kant again distinguishes between what understanding and the imagination contribute respectively to experience by noting that the understanding “imparts a synthetic *unity* to the *synthesis* of the power of imagination” (A237/B296; my ital.; compare B383).

This same differentiation persists well after the B-edition, in Kant’s third *Critique* and then again even later in the *Anthropology*, as well as in Kant’s lectures from the period. Throughout the last *Critique*, Kant refers to “the power of the imagination as ‘a capacity of intuitions,’” and is interested in what happens when it is “brought into accord [Einstimmung] with the understanding, as the faculty of concepts,” which again both associates the imagination with sensibility and marks its distinctness from understanding (5:190; 5:217; 5:244). What is more, Kant continues to differentiate the respective contributions of sense, imagination, and understanding to cognition along now-familiar lines: The senses “give” an object, the power of imagination acts to effect “the composition [Zusammensetzung] of the manifold,” and the understanding brings “the unity of the manifold into concepts” (5:238).

Similarly, in the *Anthropology* and in later lectures, Kant gives no suggestion that the imagination is instead really just the understanding, continuing instead to identify imagination with one of the “parts [Stücke]” of sensibility (7:153; cf. 24:753; 28:473). Indeed, at least *some* such non-understanding-dependent activity of imagination must be possible, for otherwise it would make no sense for Kant to ascribe imagination to animals who do not possess understanding at all, as he does throughout his career (cf. 28:690f, 277).<sup>12</sup>

The passage that most suggests that Kant might mean to assimilate the imagination to the understanding occurs in the very first section of the B-deduction proper. As noted above, Kant here seems to explicitly characterize all synthesis – or at least “*combination* [Verbindung] (conjunctio)” – as

<sup>12</sup> Compare Naragon 1990: 8f; see also McLear 2011: 8.



an “action of the understanding” (B129–30). Since Kant here even means to include both unconscious combination (“whether we are conscious of it or not”) and also the combination not just of concepts but also of intuitions, this might also be taken to suggest that he is now including even whatever “blind” synthesis of imagination (of which we are seldom “conscious”) he had introduced a few pages back in the Leitfaden (B103). Note, however, that, strictly speaking, Kant here only ascribes *combination* in particular, and not *synthesis* in general, to the understanding. In the earlier Leitfaden passage, Kant contrasts “synthesis *in general* [überhaupt],” which he assigns to the imagination, on the one hand, and “synthesis in the most universal significance [in der allgemeinsten Bedeutung],” on the other hand, which he takes to involve the “*comprehending* [begreifen] of the manifold of different representations in one *cognition*” (B103; my ital.) – and so involving a “concept [Begriff],” as a “universal representation” (cf. 9:91). But then while combination as a *species* of synthesis involving “universal significance” therefore surely involves the understanding, there is no need to read Kant as here claiming that *every* case of synthesis will do so as well.<sup>13</sup>

## 5. The Role of the Imagination and Images in Perception

Having distinguished imagination from both mere sense and understanding, we can now begin to focus more closely upon the specific contribution that imaginative syntheses make to the generation of experience. I will focus first (Section 5.1) on the mental act that Kant takes to be most immediately subsequent to the syntheses of the imagination, but still prior to experience itself (as empirical cognition) – namely, what Kant calls “*perception* [Wahrnehmung]” as the “empirical *consciousness*” of appearances (cf. B207). We will then focus on the specific role played in perception by the “*images*” produced by the imagination, as the representation of what is given in intuition, and therefore as the content of perception itself (Section 5.2).

*5.1 Imagination and perception.* As I have shown at greater length in earlier work,<sup>14</sup> “perception” is Kant’s technical term for the “empirical *consciousness* [Bewußtsein]” of appearances (A119–20; B207; B160–2; B202–3). He also uses the term to describe consciousness of the empirical

<sup>13</sup> The distinction between mere synthesis and “combination” as the “unity of the synthesis” is drawn again later in the B-Deduction (cf. B161); see also B164, where Kant contrasts the understanding as a capacity for “combining [verbinden]” with imagination as a capacity for “connecting [verknüpfen].” (Thanks to Anja Jauernig for discussion.)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Tolley 2016b and forthcoming.



intuitions in which appearances are contained (8:217; cf. 20:274) and the consciousness of the sensations that contribute to the matter of appearances (cf. A120; B376).<sup>15</sup> Perception thus goes beyond both mere sensation and also empirical intuition by including consciousness constitutively, whereas intuition and sensation can be present in the mind without consciousness (cf. 7:135; A120), as “blind” representations (cf. B75). Kant understands perception (in his sense), by contrast, to essentially involve a kind of reflective awareness of these sensible representations, such that our minds “take [nehmen]” this sensible representation “with awareness [wahr],” to give a more etymologically literal rendering of the German “*wahr-nehmen*.”<sup>16</sup>

Crucially, what enables perception to go beyond the mere “having” of an intuition (or sensation) in mind is precisely the activity of the imagination sketched above: The consciousness of intuition that is added in perception depends specifically on the activity of imagination already having been “directed at” the intuition. This dependence is affirmed in both editions of the Deduction. In the A-edition’s discussion of the synthesis of apprehension, Kant claims that the result of the imagination’s activity (taking up, distinguishing, running through, taking together what is already contained in an intuition) is to “represent appearances empirically *in perception*” (A115; my ital.). A few paragraphs later, Kant emphasizes even more sharply that there is a step involved from having an appearance in mind to perception itself: “the first thing that is given to us is appearance, which, if it is combined with consciousness [mit Bewußtsein verbunden], is called perception” (A119–20). Note Kant’s “*if* [wenn]” here, which implies that an appearance *per se* is given (in intuition) *whether or not* it is subsequently “combined with consciousness” and thereby taken up in a perception. And it is exactly here that Kant explicitly claims that “the power of the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself” (A120n). (Note: “perception” and *not* “intuition.”)

In the B-edition, Kant continues to distinguish perception from intuition and again emphasizes the same dependence of perception on “apprehension” (and hence, imagination), as a synthesis “through which perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of it (as appearance), becomes possible” (B160): “Thus if, e.g., I make the empirical intuition of a house

<sup>15</sup> Due to its essential relation to sensation, Kant does not use the term “perception” in relation to the consciousness of pure intuition, claiming instead that space and time “cannot be perceived in themselves” (B207; cf. B219).

<sup>16</sup> So, the term does not, in this period, have primarily the connotation of “taking-true” or “taking-to-be-true” (the latter is instead connoted by “Fürwahrhalten”).

into a perception through apprehension of its manifold . . .” (B162). Note, again, Kant’s use of “if [wenn]” here, which implies that an empirical intuition *per se* is what it is *whether or not* it is “made into a perception through apprehension.” Note also the means by which such consciousness (i.e., perception, *not* the original intuition itself) comes about: the synthesis of the imagination (cf. B162n).

5.2. *Images and perception.* If this helps to clarify Kant’s claim that the *activity* of the imagination makes possible perception (in his sense of the term), we can now turn to the task of specifying what new kind of *content*, if any, is involved in perception as the “empirical consciousness” of what is given in intuition. One general idea Kant puts forward about the consciousness of a representation is that it is or involves the *representation of* this other representation (cf. 9:33; 24:701). Perception, then, as the empirical consciousness of an empirical (sensation-involving) intuition, should likewise involve the *representation of* this intuition in some form or other. What I want to show now is that Kant appears to identify “*images* [Bilder]” as what function as the contents of perception, i.e., the means by which perception (empirical consciousness) represents intuitions.

In intuition itself, we are simply “given” an appearance as an object (B33). This object (appearance) itself contains a manifold of sensory qualities organized according to the form of space or time (B34). In the transition to perception, the power of imagination acts “to *bring* the manifold of intuition into an *image*” (A120). The result of the imagination’s acts (of taking-up, running-through, distinguishing, taking-together, etc. the empirical intuition toward which it is “directed”) is that an image is formed *of* the intuition, and a new content is thereby introduced into the mind. Perception itself contrasts with intuition because perception has as its immediate object an image that *represents* the appearance that was first simply *given* in intuition. For this reason, perception itself should be understood to represent the objects of intuition (appearances) only *mediately*, by way of forming images of them (cf. B15, B156, B179–82, B496).<sup>17</sup>

What does this image-formation out of an intuition look like? Student transcripts from Kant’s mid-1770s lectures on metaphysics provide the following suggestive discussion of the process. Here, Kant speaks of the “illustrative [abbildende] capacity” of the mind “forming [bilden]” images (“illustrations”) out of intuition:

<sup>17</sup> Compare Pendlebury 1996: 134, though Pendlebury seems ultimately to want to downplay any ontological distinction between image and intuition.

My mind is always busy with forming the image [Bild] of the manifold while it goes through [durchgeht] it. E.g., when I see a city, the mind then forms an image of the object which it has before it while it runs through [durchläuft] the manifold . . . This illustrative [abbildende] capacity is the formative [bildende] capacity of intuition. The mind must undertake many observations [Beobachtungen] in order to illustrate an object [einen Gegenstand abzubilden] so that it illustrates the object differently from each side. E.g., a city looks [sieht aus] differently from the east than from the west. There are thus many appearances of a thing according to the various sides and points of view [Gesichtspunkten]. The mind must make an illustration [Abbildung] from all these appearances, when it takes [nimmt] them all together [zusammen]. (28:235–6)

By “taking together” several appearances of that object, each of which provides a “look” at the object from a certain “side and point of view,” our mind forms an image of it. The complex image in question thus is a composite involving the holding together of the many “looks” of an object into one representation that comprises the whole of them. As in the *Critique*, then, individual appearances do not yet count as images (in Kant’s sense), though they contribute to images of objects by giving the material for them, the partial (perspectival) views on the object.<sup>18</sup>

The most originary sort of image-formation, however, should accompany what might be called the initial “*simple* apprehension” of what is given in intuition – in a single look, as it were – either as to its parts or as to the whole. The example of the city also involves the syntheses of reproduction (retention), and results from the holding together of several previous moments of consciousness (previous “perceptions”). What this example covers over is the more originary initial “taking up [aufnehmen]” of any one sensation (“impression”) into an initial perception in the very first place. Kant indicates awareness of this difference by offering two characterizations of the synthesis of apprehension: first, as transforming an intuition into a perception and so first “making” perception “possible” (cf. B160); second, as an “action exercised immediately *upon* perceptions” (cf. A120).<sup>19</sup> Insofar as the former involves a more immediate “taking up”

<sup>18</sup> For earlier discussions of this passage (Makkreel 1990: 16–17, and 22f) and especially Matherne 2015, compare Tracz in progress. Compare also Kant’s own example of “placing five points in a row” to form an “image” of five (B179). The sheer having (intuiting) of a manifold (appearance) that includes five points in a row would not yet be an *image*; this is only achieved when the manifold *is itself represented* via an act – and, in particular, represented so as to include the series of looks on the five points that track the “placing” of them (by the mind).

<sup>19</sup> A related dual use of “perception” itself is found in the Second Analogy, first to describe the result of “synthesis” of *appearances* and then to describe a “connection” of *perceptions* (B233).

of an intuition, prior to any further “connecting” with a second “taking up,” this very first “taking up” or apprehending should yield a more originary “imaging,” i.e., a first immediate representing of a single intuition itself – an *apprehensio simplex*.

To be sure, once these initial “takings-up” (first simple “looks”) have occurred, our imagination can *then* form more complex images by connecting the initially formed images together through an “action exercised immediately *upon perceptions*” themselves – i.e., by collecting the succession of initial perceptions (consciousnesses) of the parts of what is contained in the manifold (A120; my ital.). The result of this further imaginative act (involving reproduction, association, etc.) will be a more complex perception of a more complex image, like that ultimately judged to be of the city. What is crucial, however, is that there must already have been earlier simple apprehensions (viz. imagings) of the parts themselves in order for there to be something “reproduced” and “taken together” in the first place.<sup>20</sup> Already at this originary, “simple” level, then, the imagination is “a necessary ingredient *in perception itself*” (A120n). (Note again: in perception, *not* in intuition.)

## 6. From Imagination and Perception to Experience

We can now turn to the *further* step from *perception* (empirical *consciousness* of our *representations*) to *experience* – i.e., the “empirical *cognition*” of existent *objects*, such as substances, causes, and so on (B217) – in order to clarify the role of imagination and images in the constitution of experience itself. Recall that experience itself is defined by Kant as “a cognition that determines an object *through perceptions*,” and in fact is “a synthesis of *perceptions*” (B218). Hence, however exactly the transition to experience should be understood, there is little reason for thinking that images will somehow get fully *eliminated* in experience itself, as the recent spate of anti-imagist, “direct realist” accounts of Kant would have it.<sup>21</sup> In fact,

<sup>20</sup> This also suggests that what is ultimately being “reproduced” is not the original sensation or intuition (since this is now absent), but rather a representation (consciousness) of it – i.e., a perception of it, or an image of it.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. again the works of Allais, McLearn, Gomes, and Collins cited above. Allais, for her part, has recently admitted that “imagination presents an image immediately” (cf. Allais 2015: 147n4). What is not yet made clear in Allais’ account is why Kant would consistently introduce the detour through the imagination and images (apprehension, perception, empirical consciousness, etc.) on the road to experience in the first place, if the relevant object judged in experience (e.g., a body in physical space) were itself what was already “immediately” present to mind in intuition (cf. *ibid.*) – rather than a *sensation* being present “in” intuition, an *image* as the subsequent object of *consciousness* in

I will now argue that the flow of Kant's analysis suggests precisely the opposite: Far from being an "immediate" relation to things like physical bodies, experience comes about through an *even further mediation* than is involved in perception itself – namely, the representation of *perceptions* (and their contents: images) as being a certain way *because* the *object* that their intuitions represent is itself a certain way.

We have already noted several places where Kant denies that the synthesis of the imagination on its own can achieve everything required for cognition: In addition to the provision of a manifold by sense, and the synthesis of this manifold by the imagination, this synthesis itself must be "brought to concepts" by the understanding for cognition to arise (cf. B103–4). Kant also describes this further act as the use of concepts by the understanding to "give unity" to the synthesis, something that consists in "the representation of this necessary synthetic unity" by way of these concepts (B104). In the A-edition, Kant characterizes this concept-involving act as representing "the unity that the *object* makes necessary" – i.e., representing the synthesis our imagination has performed as making us conscious not just of something subjective about our representations but about something "*distinct from* all of our representations" – namely, an object that "corresponds" to these representations (A105; my ital.). We use concepts of these further objects to "effect [bewirken] synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition," by representing the synthesis of intuitions by the imagination as necessary because of what is represented by these intuitions (rather than some whim of the imagination itself); in this way, "we *cognize* the object" itself (A105; my ital.).

This subsumption of imaginative synthesis under concepts thus results in a still more "mediate" representation. Though images are already representations of representations (intuitions), they do not represent these representations as being the way that they are *because of* further *objects* that they represent. The way that an intuition is represented in an image by the imagination is not itself further represented as being the way that it is because of the object that "corresponds" to the intuition itself (A104) – e.g., because of the physical body (e.g., ship, city) that is represented by the intuition in the first place. The latter happens only

perception, and so on. Nor is the mechanism clarified by which we move from the mere "consciousness" of sensations in perception via *images*, back to a (immediate?) "cognition" of *objects* in experience via *concepts*. (Again, this is not to say that such a direct-realist-friendly account of intuition and experience cannot be given, but is simply a request for such an account to be given or even its possibility clearly sketched.)

when, in addition to the imagination's apprehending and connecting-together of the representations *with one another*, the understanding introduces "the determinate relation of given representations *to an object*" (B137; my ital.). It is only with the understanding's concepts of objects that we are able to "judge" about this determinate relation and thereby "to say that these two representations are *combined in the object* [im Objekt verbunden], i.e., regardless of any difference in the condition of the subject, and are not merely *together in perception* [in der Wahrnehmung beisammen] (however often as that might be repeated)" (B142; my ital.; cf. 4:298).

The full expression of the judgment that constitutes an experience (empirical cognition) would thus seem to be: the determination of an object *by means of* the representation *of the synthesis of the imagination*, as *itself* being "unified" in the way that it is *because of* the object. To use the example from the previous section: In experience, we move from being conscious, e.g., of one of the "looks" on a city, or from the consciousness of one "illustration" that results from several looks being connected, to the recognition in a judgment that all of these looks (and the synthesized illustration itself) are the way that they are *because of* some further object that is distinct from these representations themselves – e.g., the city itself. This gives sense to Kant's claim that judgment is "the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it" (B93).

## 7. Conclusion: Imagination, Images, and Pure Cognition

In the foregoing I have tried to foreground the systematic contribution of imagination to empirical cognition, against the minimizing readings, and to highlight the specific site of its activity, against the maximizing readings. I have singled out *perception* (empirical consciousness), rather than *intuition*, as the initial site of the imagination's contribution to experience (empirical cognition). *Via* its syntheses of apprehension and reproduction, the imagination forms images of intuitions by taking them up and connecting them together. I have also argued that the imagination performs these syntheses prior even to the *consciousness* (perception) that they make possible, insofar as synthesis *per se* is "blind," and (a fortiori) prior to the involvement of the *understanding* (which "brings" these syntheses "to concepts").

In conclusion, I would like to address what I take to be the primary motivation for the maximizing readings, which in fact does not lie primarily in Kant's account of the constitution of *empirical* cognition, but instead

in the way Kant's treatment of the imagination is thought to fit into the Transcendental Deduction's argument for the possibility of *pure* cognition. In the Deduction, Kant means to establish *a priori* the "objective validity" of the pure concepts ("categories") of the understanding (cf. B122) and thereby demonstrate the possibility of pure cognition by way of these concepts (cf. B118–19). For many, Kant's argument has seemed to require that it is the understanding, after all, that is responsible for producing the original *pure intuitions* of space and time in the first place, in order to guarantee that they, along with everything given within them (and hence every *empirical* intuition), will necessarily stand under its pure concepts. It is argued, further, Kant himself ultimately describes this pure productive activity as being performed by the understanding (qua the imagination) as engaging in a "pure," "transcendental" synthesis (cf. B151f).<sup>22</sup>

Now, Kant surely does mean to single out a "pure" synthesis by the imagination as contributing something crucial to the argument of the Deduction (A115–16), and he surely takes this to be "productive" rather than "reproductive," not least because it occurs *a priori* (A118). More specifically, the imagination's capacity for a "pure" synthesis of apprehension *a priori* is said to "generate [erzeugen]" certain "representations" of space and of time that are not possible on the basis of sensibility alone (A99–100). In fact, Kant even goes so far as to claim that "not even the purest and most fundamental representations [reinste und erste Grundvorstellungen] of space and time could ever arise [entspringen]" without the synthesis of apprehension and reproduction (A102). All of these remarks have been taken to support versions of maximizing interpretations, based on the assumption that Kant here must have in mind the pure intuitions of space and time that Kant had also called "original" representations in the Aesthetic (B40; B48).<sup>23</sup>

What is less clear, however, is *which* representations exactly this act of pure productivity on the part of the imagination actually produces. Given the model we have sketched concerning *empirical* intuition, we might expect that what the imagination would contribute via the *pure* synthesis of apprehension is not the production of the pure intuition itself but instead a *pure image* of this pure intuition. In fact, in the Schematism, Kant does single out products of pure imaginative syntheses by the name

<sup>22</sup> Compare especially Ginsborg 2008; Matherne 2015; Williams 2018.

<sup>23</sup> As is argued by Waxman 1991, Longuenesse 1998 and 2005, Grüne 2009, among others; see also Rosefeldt this volume. (More recently, however, Grüne now seems more open to the idea that the mere "having" of pure intuitions does not require any synthesis; cf. Grüne 2016.)



of “pure *images*,” i.e., “pure images” of space and time (B182).<sup>24</sup> What is more, as with the empirical case, the images themselves are said to result from “the apprehension of the intuition” – even as they are in turn something whose “unity” can subsequently be represented in a concept of the understanding (B182).<sup>25</sup> But then, once the distinction between pure intuition and pure image has been more clearly brought to the fore, it is open to us to see Kant here as claiming that what is thereby generated by the pure synthesis of apprehension by the imagination is not the original pure *intuitions* of space and of time after all, but instead the first, most “original” *representations (images)* of these pure intuitions.<sup>26</sup>

The same distinction between originary intuition and pure image can also be kept in mind when considering a second text, now from the B-Deduction, that has been taken likewise to imply the “maximizing” reading. In the course of noting that the Aesthetic has already indicated that “space and time are represented *a priori* not merely as *forms* of sensible intuition but also as *intuitions* themselves” (B160), Kant then immediately adds a footnote that suggests that a synthesis is in fact first responsible for the representation of space and time “as intuitions” (B160–1n). This, in turn, has been taken to imply that synthesis *produces* the original pure intuitions in the first place.<sup>27</sup>

Against this we can interpret the passage, alternatively, as drawing on just the distinction noted above: Whereas the original pure *intuitions* of space and time only represent space and time “as forms,” the imagination via synthesis is able to produce the *representation* of these intuitions “as intuitions.”<sup>28</sup> Again, the pure *images*, and not the pure intuitions themselves, are exactly well-suited to play the role of the “fundamental representations” of *these intuitions* “as intuitions.” The footnote makes this shift of topic even more evident by further clarifying what is involved in the representation of something “as intuition,” noting that this is equivalent to “representing” space (the pure intuition) “as *object*” (B160n). The pure

<sup>24</sup> Later in the “Stufenleiter,” Kant again refers to the “pure image of sensibility” (B377).

<sup>25</sup> This is so, even though (to repeat) Kant does not allow for “pure” *perception* in the strict sense (cf. B207).

<sup>26</sup> Compare Kant’s reply to Eberhard, where he insists on keeping pure images of space and time sharply distinct from the original pure intuitions from which these images are formed and which “make possible” images in the first place (8:222).

<sup>27</sup> If this reading is then combined with a reading according to which “synthesis” and “combination” mean the same thing, then this footnote will be taken to imply a kind of intellectualism if not conceptualism about pure intuition itself. Compare Onof and Schulting 2015; cf. Messina 2014.

<sup>28</sup> This is, in turn, the basis for the representation of the “unity” of this synthesis, “through which the *concepts* of space and time first become possible” (B160–1n; my ital.).



intuition itself does not represent space “as object”; it simply contains space as a “mere form” in which sensations will be ordered (B34–5). The representation of this form “as object,” by contrast, comes about only *after* the pure synthesis of apprehension, after a “grasping-together [Zusammenfassung]” (B160n).<sup>29</sup>

Still, though the interpretation we have been developing here can help illuminate much of the basic structure of this infamous footnote, it must be acknowledged that we have not yet addressed one last complication: Kant actually uses the term “formal *intuition*,” rather than “pure *image*,” to name the representation of pure intuition “as intuition”, i.e., what comes about through synthesis of imagination (B160n). Taken out of context, this surely might suggest that the imagination produces intuitions after all – at least “formal intuitions,” and perhaps others as well.<sup>30</sup> Here, however, we can note that, in the *Prolegomena*, Kant explicitly aligns the expression “formal intuition” in particular with “the *image* [Bild] we form” of the form of sensibility, rather than with the originary intuition of this form (4:287; my ital.). This terminological alignment, of course, is just what our reading would predict.

In general, then, none of the main texts cited as motivation for the maximizing reading actually require that we take Kant to be claiming that the imagination is able to ontologically generate or bring the original pure intuitions themselves into existence. Rather, these can all be read in such a way that what is newly produced by the imagination is the *representation* of the pure intuition, an intuition previously had but now represented (“determined”) in a certain way – e.g., with a certain shape “traced” or a certain number of points “placed” in space. Nothing has changed about the underlying intuition of space *itself* or the pure sensory manifold that it contains; it has simply been *represented* by me in a new way.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The distinction between pure intuition and pure image also allows for an alternative, non-maximalist reading of remarks to the effect that space and time as “forms of intuiting” are associated with certain “entia imaginaria,” despite not being themselves “objects to be intuited” (e.g., B347). (Waxman 1991 makes much of these passages; compare Longuenesse 2005.) While the forms of intuiting do provide the contents of the pure intuitions of space and time, and, consequently, the objects of the pure images, the forms themselves need not be identical with these images or any other “entia imaginaria.”

<sup>30</sup> Earlier in the B-edition itself, Kant describes imagination as “the capacity to represent an object in intuition without its presence,” and, more specifically, the capacity that can “give a corresponding intuition to the concepts of understanding” (B151). See also Stephenson 2015: 496–7.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., when I “apprehend” an intuition as to a figure present in the manifold (e.g., a series of dots), and thereby “apperceive” it and “make it into a perception,” I “as it were draw its shape [Gestalt]” (cf. B162) – and yet do so without actually “producing” an entirely new manifold in such an act. This is even more clear in the case of reproduction qua *memory*: I do not make up or constitute the

This, then, provides at least the sketch of a parallel analysis of the pure synthesis of the imagination, which supplies pure images (via “pure” apprehension) of pure intuition, rather than producing these intuitions themselves. To fully complete this parallel with empirical synthesis, however, we would need to show, first, that the pure synthesis of the imagination is *also* something that can occur prior to the pure activity of the understanding, and perhaps even “blindly” (without consciousness); second, that the addition of (pure) consciousness yields a new mental act that involves a representation of pure intuition; and finally, that it is only with the still further addition of understanding and its concepts that pure cognition via pure (images of pure) intuition can occur.

Concerning the first two points, there are not many direct textual anchors available, as Kant’s remarks about “pure synthesis” in the Deduction are focused almost wholly on what pure cognition the understanding is capable of achieving by acting on the imagination to effect a “transcendental” synthesis (cf. B151) – rather than on what the pure imagination might be capable of on its own. Concerning the last point, however, the text is fairly clear: It is only after we have “the consciousness of the *unity* of the synthesis” that is involved in the making of an image of five, of a triangle, etc., i.e., once we have or use the relevant “*concept*,” that we can be said to “*cognize*” the number being imaged (cf. A103). This, in turn, suggests that the pure imagination can, in fact, perform syntheses of pure manifolds and thereby represent them “in” a mind, prior to any consciousness that this is happening because of any object to be cognized, and (a fortiori) without any further objects thereby actually being “cognized” – though certainly more work needs to be done to fully establish what the imagination is and is not capable of entirely on its own.<sup>32</sup>

intuition in question; I recall it to mind by *representing* it even though it is now absent. The same would seem to be true of the *a priori* case as well: I do not produce a new pure manifold; rather, I determine it in a specific way by again using my imagination to “draw” shapes in the pure intuition of space, or to perform a parallel “figurative synthesis” in time to provide a “determination of time [Zeitbestimmung],” not by producing a whole new pure intuition of time itself but by using my imagination to represent the original intuition of time as delimited in specific ways (cf. B184f). Indeed, it is the prior presence of the “manifold of sensibility” – something the mind “has lying before it” *a priori*, as “the manifold of pure *a priori* intuition” that is “contained” in the pure intuitions of space and time (B102) – that allows the imagination to have something on which to perform the “pure” version of its syntheses (cf. A115), and *then* to produce its own additional content.

<sup>32</sup> Thanks to audiences at Ohio State University and Universität Mainz for their feedback on earlier drafts of this chapter. Thanks also to Lucy Allais, Stefanie Grüne, Scott Harkema, Tobias Rosefeldt, Lisa Shabel, Brian Tracz, Eric Watkins, and Marcus Willaschek for comments on earlier drafts.

*Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time*

Tobias Rosefeldt

**1. Imagination as an Ingredient of Intuition**

In the *Transcendental Aesthetic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously claims that our representations of space and time are *a priori* intuitions. They are *a priori*, Kant argues, because they could not have been generated on the basis of empirical intuitions of particular spatial or temporal properties and because they represent something that is ontologically prior to what the latter represent.<sup>1</sup> They are intuitions because they are singular representations and contain an infinity of determinations in them, features that no concept graspable by a finite mind could possess.<sup>2</sup> Kant continues by claiming that the only possible explanation of these features of our representations of space and time is that they result from what he calls “forms of our intuitions” and that they do not represent things, features of things, or relations among things that exist independently of us.<sup>3</sup>

At that point in the first *Critique*, the reader might get the impression that Kant’s appeal to space and time as forms of intuition is meant to be a complete explanation of how our representations of space and time are possible. She might also think that representing space and time is a mental state that is *exclusively* generated by the faculty of intuition, i.e., without any contribution of the understanding. The strength of these impressions dissipates later on in the first *Critique*, however, when Kant introduces a further requirement on our ability to represent space and time. Although also present in the first edition of the first *Critique*,<sup>4</sup> it is most famously formulated in the following passage from Section 26 of the B-edition:

... space and time are represented *a priori* not merely as *forms* of sensible intuition, but also as *intuitions* themselves (which contain a manifold), and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A 23–4/B 38–9 and A 30–1/B 46.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A 24–5/B 39–40 and A 31–2/B 47–8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A 26/B 42 and A 32–3/B 49–50.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A 98–102, A 120, A 124.

thus with the determination of the *unity* of this manifold in them (see the Transcendental Aesthetic).<sup>5</sup> Thus even *unity of the synthesis* of the manifold, outside or within us, hence also a *combination* with which everything that is to be represented as determined in space or time must agree, is already given *a priori*, along with (not in) these intuitions. (B 160–1)

In a famous footnote to this passage, Kant explains that in the *Aesthetic* he had ascribed the unity of the intuition of space to sensibility in order to make clear that this unity is not generated by the use of concepts (B 160–1 fn.). He then adds, however, that this does not exclude the assumption that this unity “presupposes a synthesis which does not belong to the senses” (ibid.), i.e., a synthesis that is not provided by the faculty of intuition alone. Through this synthetic activity, which is a result of the understanding determining sensibility, “space and time are first given as objects of intuition” (ibid.), in a representational state that Kant refers to as “formal intuition” (ibid.).<sup>5</sup>

A little earlier, Kant had already introduced the kind of synthetic activity to which he is here referring. He describes this “synthesis of sensible intuition, which is possible and necessary *a priori*” as “figurative” (*synthesis speciosa*) and calls it “the *transcendental synthesis of the imagination*” (B 151). The imagination, at least in its transcendental or “productive” variant (B 152, A 118), is introduced by Kant as a faculty that somehow results from a cooperation of sensibility and understanding. It belongs on the side of sensibility insofar as the representations it generates are always intuitions (B 151). But since these intuitions are not generated by sensibility alone, which is a purely passive faculty, but are rather spontaneously produced, the imagination is a guise of the spontaneity of the understanding. Kant sometimes calls it “the effect of the understanding on sensibility” (B 151; cf. also 153–4).<sup>6</sup>

A couple of pages later Kant provides a more concrete model of how the spontaneous activity of the imagination generates *a priori* intuitions of space and time. He again claims that the senses alone contain “the mere *form* of intuition, but without combination of the manifold in it, and thus ... do not yet contain any *determinate* intuition at all, which is

<sup>5</sup> In taking these remarks at face value, i.e., as claiming that pure intuition involves a synthetic activity of the understanding, I side with interpreters such as Waxman (1991), Longuenesse (1998), Valaris (2008), Gomes (2014), Schmitz (2015), and Indregard (2017). In Section 6, I will briefly comment on a recent criticism of this view.

<sup>6</sup> In another footnote to section 26, he reserves the term “understanding” for the more narrowly conceived spontaneous activity of generating and combining concepts and says that “it is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and here under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition” (B 162 fn.).

possible only through the consciousness of the determination of the manifold through the transcendental act of the imagination (synthetic influence of the understanding on the inner sense), which I have named the figurative synthesis" (B 154). And he then adds the following phenomenological description of cases of acts of the transcendental imagination:

We can always perceive this in ourselves. We cannot think of a line without *drawing* it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without *describing* it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without *placing* three lines perpendicular to each other from the same point [aus dem selben Punkte zu setzen],<sup>7</sup> and we cannot even represent time without, in *drawing* a straight line (which is to be the external figurative representation of time), attending merely to the act of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine inner sense, and thereby attending to the succession of this determination in inner sense. (B 154)

The highlighted verbs – “drawing,” “describing,” “placing” – denote acts of the imagination. Kant calls these acts “motion[s], as act[s] of the subject” and distinguishes them from motion “as determination of an object” (B 155). He explains this distinction as follows:

Motion of an *object* in space does not belong in a pure science, thus also not in geometry; for that something is movable cannot be cognized *a priori* but only through experience. But motion, as *description* of a space, is a pure act of the successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive imagination, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental philosophy. (B 155 fn.)

So the paradigm cases of acts of the transcendental imagination seem to be the movements of points by which we construct the three-dimensional Euclidian space and the geometrical figures within it. Kant’s contrast between these movements of the imagination and physical motions makes

<sup>7</sup> I depart from the Guyer/Wood translation here that translates “aus dem selben Punkte” as “at the same point.” The awkward sounding German original makes clear that Kant does not think about putting the three lines together that meet at the same point but drawing the three lines all starting from the same point. Gerold Prauss has recently claimed that there is a problem with this construction of space by drawing three lines starting from one point because the lines are only drawn into one direction whereas the space they are supposed to construct is also extended in the opposite direction (Prauss 2015, 117). This objection rests on a confusion: If we draw the three lines on a piece of paper there certainly is a distinction between drawing them in one direction or drawing them in the opposite direction. This is because the piece of paper provides a frame of reference according to which this distinction can be made. However, if the three lines are drawn in empty space, there is no such distinction. The drawing of the line is just the growing of the distance between its two endpoints (see Kant’s remarks about the relativity of movement in the *Phoronomy* chapter of the *Metaphysical Foundations*, AA IV 480–4).

clear that the former should not be understood as movements performed when doing compass-and-straightedge constructions (for these would be physical motions themselves) but rather their mental analogues. Transcendental synthesis of the productive imagination is an activity in our mind by which we become aware of the *a priori* forms space and time and their determinations. It is this awareness that he later calls “formal intuition” (B 160 fn.), and that he had called “pure intuition” in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*.

When people discuss Kant’s remarks about the role of the imagination for pure intuition, they typically focus on the case of the *a priori* intuition of space. I will depart from this norm in what follows and will instead concentrate on the role of the imagination for the intuition of time. More specifically I want to ask *why* Kant thought that we have to draw a straight line in the imagination in order to represent time and *how exactly* drawing this line makes this intuition possible. I will discuss the first of these two questions in the next section. I will begin by focusing on Kant’s general reasons for taking a synthetic activity to be a necessary ingredient of intuition. I will then try to explain why the synthetic activity has to be productive and performed by the imagination. The second how-exactly question, the topic of Section 3, addresses a possible obstacle with drawing a line to represent time. The question is how drawing a line allows us to represent time as something that has a *direction*. Although this might seem unproblematic at first sight, it is in fact not easy to explain once we assume that drawing a line is also our means of representing one of the three dimensions of space. I will suggest an interpretation of why Kant thought that not drawing a line on its own, but rather drawing it while attending to our own activity allows us to represent time. In Section 4, I will explain how the proposed interpretation can do justice to Kant’s claim that time is a form of inner sense. Section 5 concludes with a short remark on recent criticism of the view that a synthesizing activity plays any role for the intuition of space and time.

## 2. Pure Intuition and Productive Imagination

We have seen that Kant’s reason for assuming a transcendental synthesis of the imagination as a necessary precondition of our intuition of space and time is that, if the latter are not merely considered as forms of intuition but also as objects of intuition, they are represented “with the determination of the unity of th[e] manifold in them” (B 160). For Kant, representing a manifold as a unity amounts to representing the manifold *as such*,

i.e., as a manifold. Representing a manifold without representing it *as such* would mean to represent several items without distinguishing them from each other and being aware of their plurality. If the plurality is mereological, as in the case with spatiotemporal complexes, this would either mean representing parts, one after the other, without representing them as parts of a whole or representing a whole, which *de facto* consists of parts, without any awareness of its parts. A Kantian example of the first kind of case is someone who lives through a certain period of time but permanently forgets the moments she has already experienced (A 99). One of his examples of the second kind of case is our perception of the milky way, i.e., a whole that consists of a huge manifold of parts of which we are not aware.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that Kant does not exclude that in the latter case we *somehow* represent the parts of the perceived whole. In fact, he explicitly assumes that this is what we do in the case of our perception of the milky way, which he takes to contain representations of all the single stars of which it consists.<sup>9</sup> However, these representations are unconscious and hence do not allow us to be aware of the parts of the milky way, where being aware of them would mean to be able to perceptually discriminate them.<sup>10</sup>

Even if we accept that there is a further condition on presenting not just parts and wholes but parts *as* parts of wholes and wholes *as* consisting of parts, it is still not clear why this further condition should consist in a process that Kant calls “synthesis of the manifold of sensible intuition.”<sup>11</sup> The most detailed answer to the question of why the further condition consists in an act of “synthesis,” i.e., of combination, is given in the A-edition of the *Critique*. Kant starts from the assumption that the process of becoming aware of parts as parts is itself extended in time. We have to attend to each of the parts “one after the other” so to speak, “for *as contained in one moment* no representation can ever be anything other than absolute unity. Now in order for this manifold to turn into a unity of intuition (as, say, in the representation of space), it is necessary first to run through and then take together this manifoldness” (A 99). Kant continues to argue that attending to one part after the other alone is not enough to generate an awareness of the manifold of these parts as such:

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Logic* AA XXIX 879 and *Lectures on Metaphysics* Mongrovius AA XXIX 879.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Here, I follow the interpretation of Grüne (2009), ch. 1.3.2. For the role of discriminational abilities for Kant’s conception of consciousness, cf. also Wunderlich 2005.

<sup>11</sup> B 130, B 151, B 161, A 99–100.

Now it is obvious that if I draw a line in thought, or think of the time from one noon to the next . . . I must necessarily first grasp one of these manifold representations after another in my thoughts. But if I were always to lose the preceding representations (the first parts of the line, the preceding parts of time . . .) from my thoughts and not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones, then no whole representation . . . not even the purest and most fundamental representations of space and time, could ever arise. (A 102)

The need for a reproduction of previously intuited parts of a line makes intelligible why Kant thought that it is the imagination that has to play the essential role of synthesizing a sensible manifold. Kant defines the imagination as the “faculty of representing an object in intuition even without its presence” (B 151, cf. also VII 167).<sup>12</sup> Reproducing previously drawn segments of a line is an exercise of this faculty insofar as it allows us to intuit parts of the line that are no longer immediately present. However, this reproductive function is not the only one that the imagination has for cognition. In the *Anthropology*, Kant writes:

The power of imagination (*facultas imaginandi*), as a faculty of intuition without the presence of the object, is either *productive*, that is, a faculty of the original presentation of the object (*exhibitio originaria*) . . . or *reproductive*, a faculty of the derivative presentation of the object (*exhibitio derivativa*), which brings back to the mind an empirical intuition that it had previously . . . Pure intuitions of space and time belong to the productive faculty. (AA VII 167)<sup>13</sup>

So, in the case of pure intuition, the imagination must also be productive, i.e., it has to produce the manifold that is to be synthesized by drawing lines. But why does it have to have this function?

In order to illustrate this question, I will introduce the following presentational convention: I will use images of lines without an arrow in order to represent the content of an act of the imagination in which the respective line is present to the mind “at one blow,” so to speak. Lines with arrows, on the other hand, will be used to represent the content of acts of



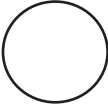

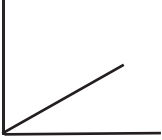
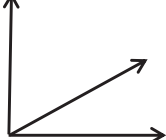
<sup>12</sup> I depart from Guyer/Wood here, who translate “Vermögen, einen Gegenstand auch *ohne dessen Gegenwart* in der Anschauung vorzustellen” as “faculty of representing an object even without its presence in intuition.” This translation would only be viable if Kant had put the emphasis on the whole phrase “ohne dessen Gegenwart in der Anschauung.” The German text makes clear that the imagination is a faculty to present something in intuition. The Guyer/Wood translation also fits much less smoothly with the sentence that immediately follows: “Since all of our intuition is sensible, the imagination, on account of the subjective condition under which alone it can give a corresponding intuition to the concepts of understanding, belongs to sensibility” (B 151).

<sup>13</sup> For this distinction, see also A 118 and B 152.



the imagination by which a line is produced by continuously moving a point. A better way to represent the latter would be to add a little movie clip in which we can see a line being drawn by the movement of a point, and the reader should imagine what she would see in such a clip, whenever she sees an arrow in the following.

We can now specify our problem in the following way: Why does Kant think that we can only represent lines, circles, and the three dimensions of space by means of acts of the imagination with content of the following kind *B* rather than of kind *A*?

	A	B
1		
2		
3		

I will discuss four possible answers to this question.

*Answer 1:* The imagination has to have content of kind *B* because only in this case is it “productive,” i.e., brings about the manifold of which its *representatum* consists. And it must be productive in this sense, because in the case of pure intuition, what we intuit is not already there to be perceived by us as in the case of empirical intuition.

I think that the second part of answer 1 addresses precisely Kant’s reason for assuming that the transcendental imagination relevant for pure intuition has to be productive. The lines drawn in empty space are not already there for us to be discovered, but are rather produced by us. However, this insight is not sufficient to show that the “production” in imagination could not take place “at one blow,” i.e., by producing contents of kind *A*.

*Answer 2:* Only contents of kind *B* guarantee that we are aware of the imagined figures *as being extended*, or *as having parts*. For, according to

Kant's theory of sensible synthesis, being aware of them as such involves attending to their manifold parts one after the other.

Again, I think that this answer addresses Kant's own main reason, in addition to that given in answer 1, for favoring the *B*-contents: Even if we were able to grasp *A*-contents "at one blow" we would then, in a second step, have to grasp the respective *B*-contents in order to be aware of the respective manifold of the *A*-contents as such. So, grasping *A*-contents seems superfluous. However, phenomenologically speaking, there seems a clear sense in which *there are A*-contents, i.e., in which the lines and circles can be phenomenally present to us "at one blow." Even if we agreed that, in some sense, this does not suffice for being aware of them "*as being extended*," or "*as consisting of parts*," we could still wonder why we always need to be aware of these figures as having these features. Does it not suffice to be aware of the line *as straight*, of the circle *as round*, or of the three dimensions of space *as being three* and *as being rectangular to each other*? And could these cases of "being aware of *as such-and-such*" not also be guaranteed by the *A*-contents?

*Answer 3:* Only contents of kind *B* guarantee that the imagined figures really have the features that we imagine them as having (e.g., that they are straight or round). For, assume that you imagine content 2.*A* – a circle in one blow. What guarantees that you have really imagined a circle and not, say, an ellipse that is very similar to a circle? Content 2.*B* is better off in this respect because its production can be guided by a rule for the drawing of the line, namely that of drawing a line by letting a point rotate with a fixed distance around another point. This rule guarantees that all segments of the line have the same distance to a common center and hence constitute a circle.

Although this answer is interesting in many respects, evaluating it would lead us to deep philosophical questions about success conditions of acts of pure imagination and the authority of this faculty. It is also unclear whether it would help in all three cases for, in the case of compass-and-straightedge constructions on the paper, the straightness of the constructed line is guaranteed by that of the straightedge, and it is not clear how something analogous could be the case for constructions in the imagination without having to presuppose 1.*A*-lines as being straight. Hence, I will not pursue this path any further.

*Answer 4:* Content of type *B* is superior to content of type *A* because only by means of the former can we represent infinitely extended magnitudes. Take the three lines represented in row 3. Clearly, they are not meant to represent the three dimensions of the space that is enclosed within the lines as they are actually drawn (or imagined, "at one blow").

They are meant to represent the three dimensions of the whole unlimited space. But how could content *3.A* represent this? Content *3.B*, on the other hand, seems more appropriate to do so. For if we draw the three lines that represent the three dimensions, this drawing of a line, even if this line is only finitely long, could be performed with an awareness that it could always be continued in its actual direction.

Again, I will not pursue this idea any further here, because it would lead us into a discussion about the question of how we can represent something infinite by imagining something finite. A further problem about answer 4 is that it does not explain why drawing lines is essential for representing finite extended magnitudes, such as lines between two points, or circles.



The fact that none of the answers proposed so far are fully satisfactory need not worry us as far as the purposes of this chapter are concerned. The reason is that in the case of the intuitive representation of time there is a further feature of the *representatum* that makes it easy to explain why only acts of the imagination with contents of type *B* are suited to represent it. The feature is that, unlike lines, circles, and the dimensions of space, time has a direction, it runs from the past to the future: “different times are not simultaneous, but successive (just as different spaces are not successive but simultaneous)” (A 31/B 47; cf. also A 33/B 49–50). Now, it seems plausible that nothing in content *1.A* could represent the direction of time. Content *1.B*, on the other hand, has a direction itself (from the left to the right) and hence seems to be better suited to represent a “flow” of time from the past to the future.<sup>14</sup> In the next section, I will try to explain how exactly this is possible.

<sup>14</sup> Due to the limitation of space I will skip a detailed discussion of Kant’s reasons for assuming that we cannot represent time but by a spatial analog (cf. A 33/B 49–50 and B 156). I think that the best explanation can be found in a passage from the *General Note on the System of Principles*, where Kant says that we can only “grasp the inner alteration through the drawing of [a] line (motion) . . . the real ground of which is that all alteration presupposes something that persists in intuition, even in order merely to be perceived as alteration, but there is no persistent intuition to be found in inner sense” (B 292; for the latter claim see also A 350, A 107). I think the deeper philosophical rationale behind this passage is the following: We can only represent succession if we represent something changing *as* changing. And we can only intuit something changing *as* changing if we intuit something permanent in a change. But that means that we need to be able to intuit two features at the same time in order to be aware that one of them is changing while the other persists. However, this is only possible if the content of our intuition is spatial, for only in the case of spatially extended magnitudes do their parts exist simultaneously. In the case of the drawing of a line, it is not enough to intuit the moving point in empty space, because by doing so we would not be aware of the change of its position. However, when we create a line by drawing it (i.e., while imagining content *1.B*) we do not only intuit its moving tip but also always simultaneously intuit the previously drawn line segment. What we imagine is a continuously growing line, and hence we are intuiting one feature that persists – the line – and one that alters – its length. This intuition of something permanent in a change is what allows us to be aware of a change as change and hence to represent succession in intuition (for this explanation, cf. Rosefeldt 2000, 66 fn. 110).

### 3. Intuiting Time as Having a Direction

So, let us assume that Kant is right when he claims that we can only represent time as having a direction, i.e., as having succeeding parts, if we draw a line rather than bring it to mind at one blow. This immediately gives rise to a new problem. For, drawing a line is not only our way of representing time but also our way of representing one of the dimensions of space, i.e., something whose parts do not succeed one another but exist simultaneously. So, drawing a line cannot, in itself, be sufficient to represent time. Indeed, Kant does not claim that it is. In the previous quote from B 154 he writes that “we cannot even represent time *without, in drawing a straight line . . . attending merely to the act of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine inner sense*, and thereby attending to the succession of this determination in inner sense” (B 154; *my emphasis*). So, what allows us to represent time is not the drawing of a line, but rather the attending to the act of figurative synthesis that we perform while drawing a line.

I will represent the content of our mind when we perform an act of the imagination of the second kind by an arrow accompanied by a picture of an eye (as a little tribute to Fichte).<sup>15</sup>

	B	C
I		

So, we can formulate Kant’s answer to our question in the following way: Although content *I.B* and *I.C* both involve the drawing of a line in imagination, by grasping the first content we represent something whose parts exist simultaneously, whereas by grasping the second content we represent something whose parts exist successively. Hence it is only by grasping content *I.C* that we represent time.

But why exactly is the drawing of a line in itself insufficient for representing time? And why does Kant assume that it is the “attending to the act of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine inner sense” that allows us to represent the *succession* of the

<sup>15</sup> See Fichte’s remarks about the I as an activity into which an eye is inserted in his *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* from 1801 (Fichte 1983, 150, 167).

apprehended parts? Kant does not give any further explanation at this point, but I think that we can reconstruct a plausible answer to these questions based on other textual resources. The main idea of my reconstruction is this: Attending to our own act of synthesis is a form of attending to our own causal efficacy, and it is exactly this awareness of a causal order that allows us to represent a succession as such. In order to make this idea plausible, I want to point to a structural similarity between our present problem and the one that Kant discusses at length in another section of the first *Critique*.

In the *Second Analogy of Experience*, Kant famously asks how, in cases of empirical intuition, we can distinguish between the experience of a manifold of features that exist simultaneously, such as the different parts of a house, and those that exist successively, such as the different stages of a movement of a ship on a river. The difficulty arises because in both cases our representational vehicle – the empirical perception of the different features – consists of a succession of representational states:

The apprehension of the manifold of appearances is always successive. The representations of the parts succeed one another. . . . Thus, e.g., the apprehension of the manifold in the appearance of a house that stands before me is successive. Now the question is whether the manifold of this house itself is also successive, which certainly no one will concede. (A 190/B 235)

Now, although in the *Second Analogy*, Kant is concerned with the case of empirical intuitions and their role for objective experience, the problem he deals with is structurally similar to that of the distinction between representing a dimension of space, i.e., a simultaneous manifold, and representing time, i.e., a successive manifold. Again, the difficulty arises because in both cases the representational vehicle – the drawing of a line in imagination – involves a succession of representational states that each represents parts of the represented manifold. Hence, by way of analogy to the last quotation, we could say: “The production of the manifold of a dimension of space is always successive. The representations of the parts succeed one another. Now the question is whether the manifold of this dimension itself is also successive, which certainly no one will concede.” And just as we can ask, “what must be added to the succession of our empirical intuition to make it the experience of an objective temporal succession such as that of the different stages of the movement of a ship?” So too, we can ask, “What must be added to the drawing of a line to make it the representation of something whose parts really exist successively, such as time?”

Now, I cannot discuss all the details of Kant's answer to the first of these questions and of the interpretational debate about it. I will just sketch what I think is the general idea of his answer in order to show that it can also be applied to the case of the pure intuition of time. The first step of the answer consists in the insight that the difference between the successive apprehension of states that exist simultaneously and the successive apprehension of states that exist successively can be spelled out by means of a certain counterfactual distinction: Only in the former case could the states have been apprehended in an order different from the one in which they were actually apprehended.<sup>16</sup> The second step of Kant's explanation is an argument to the effect that the difference of the counterfactual profile of the two kinds of cases has to be grounded in facts about the world that we perceive and that the only kinds of facts that a transcendental idealist about time can accept to play this role are facts about the causal relations among the perceived states. It is only because the prior states of the movement of the ship *cause* the later ones that we could not have perceived them in a different temporal order.<sup>17</sup>

I think that these two steps can be applied to the distinction between representing one dimension of space by drawing a line and representing time by drawing a line. As an analog to the first step we can notice that these two cases also differ in their counterfactual profile: Since the different parts of the line understood as a spatial dimension exist simultaneously, they could have been brought to our mind in a different order. For example, exactly the same line could have been produced by drawing the line from the right to the left instead of drawing it from the left to the right. However, if the drawing of a line is supposed to represent time, then its successively produced parts must be understood as segments that could not have been produced in a different order.

Now, when we come to an analog of the second step, we cannot assume that the mentioned counterfactual differences are grounded in a difference between the causal relations among the different line segments in the two cases. The reason is, of course, that we are in the realm of pure intuition, and the segments of a line drawn by the imagination do not have any causal powers. I think that it is exactly this reason why Kant thought that attending to the segments of the line and their succession alone does not suffice to represent time. There is, however, a substitute for the causal connection among the parts of the drawn line. When we draw the line, our *drawing* of the line is a causal process: We *produce* the drawn segments of

<sup>16</sup> Cf. A 192–3/B 237–8.      <sup>17</sup> Cf. A 193–4/B 238–9.

the line, so there is a causal influence from us on the drawn line. And there is also a causal order among the stages of the process of drawing the line because we do not produce the segments of the line all at once but rather one after the other. So, we could say that although the different parts of the drawn line could have been brought to our awareness in an order different from the actual one, the process of drawing the line could not have come to our awareness in a different order because as a process its parts exist successively. And this counterfactual feature of the drawing of the line is grounded in our own causal influence. So, we have to attend to our own drawing of the line in order to represent the succession of its parts and hence in order to let the drawn line represent time as something that has a direction, i.e., whose parts exist successively.

When we look back to the aforementioned passage from B 154 having this explanation in mind, we can see that this is exactly what Kant is arguing. And we now also understand why he adds that “the synthesis of the manifold in space, if we abstract from this manifold in space and attend solely to the action in accordance with which we determine the form of inner sense, first produces the concept of succession at all. The understanding does not *find* some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but *produces* it, by *affecting* inner sense” (B 155).

#### 4. Imagination, Time, and Inner Sense

The interpretation given so far assigns to the activity of the understanding, and our awareness of it, a central role for our awareness of the temporality of the world of experience. One might be worried how this is compatible with the fact that, for Kant, time is a form of sensibility, not of the understanding, and one might wonder how what I have said so far relates to Kant’s remarks about time as especially the form of *inner* sense in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. In the following, I will say a few words to address these worries. I will argue that my interpretation of section 24–6 of the B-Deduction, in fact, corresponds very smoothly to what I think is the most plausible interpretation of Kant’s account of time as the form of inner sense. This interpretation is given by Schmitz (2015), the core steps of which I will follow here.

Schmitz starts by criticizing a wrong model of understanding Kant’s remarks about space and time as forms of outer and inner sense. According to this model, outer sense provides us with representations of things as having spatial features, whereas inner sense provides us with higher-order representations of these first-order representations and represents them as

having a temporal order. There are two problems with this model. The first is that, since the higher-order representations of inner sense are sensible representations, they would have to entail sensations distinct from the ones provided by outer sense. However, Kant never talks about this second form of sensations, but, on the contrary, claims that it is the things outside of us “from which we after all get the whole matter for our cognitions, even for our inner sense” (B XXXIX fn.; cf. Schmitz 2015, 1045). The second problem with the model is that it implies that *only* inner objects such as representations can stand in a temporal order. However, Kant claims that not only inner objects but rather “all appearances in general, i.e., all objects of the senses, are in time, and necessarily stand in relations of time” (A 34/B 51; cf. Schmitz 2015, 1046).

Schmitz suggests the following alternative model of reading Kant’s remarks:<sup>18</sup> Kant’s talk about outer and inner sense reflects the fact that our passive faculty of sensibility is receptive to affection both from the outside and from the inside. When the mind is affected from the outside by numerically distinct objects, this results in representations whose content is constituted by certain sensations as their matter and space as their form. Affection from the inside, on the other hand, consists in the causal impact of the activity of the understanding that affects sensibility by synthesizing the manifold provided by outer sense. This affection does not result in meta-representations with an entirely new content but rather adds temporal features to the old content. The resulting representations represent spatial objects as having temporal features, for example, outer appearances – or, as in the case of pure intuition, points in empty space – as moving with respect to each other. Although Kant does not explain the nature and function of this affection of sensibility “from the inside” before he comes to the second part of the *Transcendental Deduction*, it is clear from what he writes in the *Aesthetic*, at least in the B-edition of the first *Critique*, that he took inner sense to be passive for precisely the reason that it is affected by the activity of the mind. In B 67–8, he speaks of time as “the form of intuition, which, since it does not represent anything except insofar as something is posited in the mind, can be nothing other than the way in which the mind is affected by its own activity, namely this positing of its representation, thus the way it is affected through itself, i.e., it is an inner sense as far as regards its form” (B 67–8).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For the following, see Schmitz 2015, 1050–2.

<sup>19</sup> Ralf Bader has recently offered an alternative solution to the mentioned problems. It is similar to that of Schmitz in that it assumes a kind of awareness that has time as its form but is not



According to Schmitz' interpretation, the primary reason why, for Kant, time is the form of *inner* sense is that it is the form that is added to representational content when sensibility is affected by an *inner* causal force, namely the synthesizing activity of the understanding. We can supplement this explanation by a more traditional understanding of inner sense, as the sense by which we are empirically aware of our own mental states, if we take into account that for Kant there is an intimate and even inextricable connection between the activity of sensible synthesis that adds temporal content to our experience and our awareness of our own mental states. This connection is reflected by the fact that in sections 24 and 25 Kant immediately combines his discussion of the transcendental synthesis of the imagination with a discussion about the possibility and limits of self-knowledge. Not only do the remarks about the imagination and its "movements" in constructing space occur in a section that starts with Kant's announcement that he would now address the paradox of how it can be that through inner sense we only know ourselves as appearances;<sup>20</sup> Kant also refers to "acts of attention" as paradigmatic examples for cases in which the understanding, under the guise of the transcendental imagination, affects inner sense.<sup>21</sup>

Although this combination of the synthetic activity of the transcendental imagination and our mode of self-knowledge might be perplexing for the reader at first sight, it makes perfect sense given our reconstruction of temporal awareness in Section 4. For, it is not the synthesis performed by the imagination alone that adds temporal content to our intuitions, but rather this synthesis combined with an awareness of this synthetic activity. By grasping a content such as *I.C.*, we are aware of our own successive synthetic activity and thereby are aware of the different stages of the movement of the point (or the growing of the line) as succeeding each other. As Kant writes, it is "attending merely to the act of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense, and *thereby* attending to the succession of this determination in inner

directed toward our own mental states but rather to the outer objects that are the content of these representational states (Bader 2017, 126–8). However, Bader claims that this awareness only results in representing the contents "as existing NOW," and that we need higher-order representations of our own representations in order to represent a temporal succession (ibid, 132–3). I find it very hard to detect a distinction between these two modes of temporality in the Kantian text. Moreover, since Bader does not discuss Kant's account of the affection of inner sense by the transcendental imagination in section 24 at all, it is very hard to see how far his proposal is meant to be an interpretation of the original Kantian theory or rather a friendly reconstruction of some elements of it. Bader also does not mention Schmitz's proposal and why he thinks that it is insufficient.

<sup>20</sup> B 152–3.

<sup>21</sup> B 156–7 fn.; for an interesting interpretation of the consequences of this passage, see Merrit and Valaris (2017).

sense” (B 154; *my emphasis*). Doing the one by doing the other is possible because being aware of the synthetic activity does not merely consist in an awareness of a pure, “naked,” activity. It consists of being aware of this activity *as being directed toward a certain content*. We are aware, for example, of our own synthesizing of the different parts of a line to one continuously growing line. The self-conscious activity of synthesizing a sensible manifold makes possible two things at once: It provides us with an awareness of the synthesized temporal manifold as such, and it enables an awareness of our own activity of synthesizing exactly this manifold and hence also of our own representing it.

One attractive feature of this interpretation of inner sense is that it allows Kant to have an account of empirical self-awareness without being committed to a meta-representational model of self-knowledge and all of its problems. For example, it seems phenomenologically adequate that our awareness of the temporal succession of the representations we have of the different stages of the movement of a point in the drawing of a line does not consist in an intuition of these representations by means of any further representation, but is rather inextricably connected with an awareness of the content of these representations, i.e., with an awareness of the succession of the different stages of the movement of the point themselves. The interpretation also makes intelligible why, in sections 24 and 25, Kant is so eager to point out that his remarks about our awareness of the activity of our understanding do not contradict his claim that we know ourselves only as we appear to ourselves, but rather support that claim. Since our awareness of this activity is inextricably intertwined with an awareness of the mental content that is its product, and since this content is partly constituted by time as a subjective form of intuition, we are not aware of the activity as it is in itself, but rather only as it appears to us in our awareness of it. Noumenal self-knowledge is impossible, because “I do not have yet another self-intuition, which would give the determining in me, of the spontaneity of which alone I am conscious, *even before the act of determination*” (B 157–8 fn., *my emphasis*). This means that, because I am not aware of my activity before its involvement in the process of synthesizing a sensible manifold (and this is not independent of the temporalized product of this process), I cannot be aware of my activity as it is in itself. This also explains why the synthetic activity of the transcendental subject – which, in itself, is not temporal – is described by Kant in temporal terms.<sup>22</sup> It is described by him in the way in which it appears to us.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the sections on the *Synthesis of Apprehension, Reproduction and Recognition* in the A-edition (A 98–110).

## 5. Conclusion

I have proposed an interpretation of Kant's remarks about the transcendental imagination that assigns to this faculty an essential role for our grasp of the temporality of the world of appearance. The assumption that Kant took the synthesis of the imagination to be a necessary ingredient of the pure intuition of space and time has provoked an intense debate recently. Critics of this assumption<sup>23</sup> point to the fact that it seems in tension with Kant's general distinction between sensibility and the understanding. Moreover, Kant assigns two features to space and time that, *prima facie*, seem incompatible with the assumption that their intuition presupposes synthesis, namely, their infinity and their representational and ontological priority over their parts.<sup>24</sup> With respect to the intuition of time, the problem can be put into the form of the following two questions: (i) How can drawing a line allow us to represent not just *finite* segments of time, but time itself, which is *infinite*, given the fact that we can always only draw finite segments of the line? (ii) How can synthesizing the parts of a line be a precondition of the intuition of time if any finite part of a line is a limitation of infinite space, and any finite part of time a limitation of infinite time?

A number of proposals have been made for how these two very good and legitimate questions can be answered in a way that does justice to Kant's remarks about the role of synthesis of the intuition of space and time.<sup>25</sup> Due to space constraints, I will refrain from adding to this discussion here and will save my own answer to these two questions for another occasion. What I want to point out, however, is that the results of our discussion should make us aware that a strongly non-conceptualist solution to the problem is not an option. By a strongly non-conceptualist solution, I mean the view that we can solve the problem by simply denying that any kind of synthesis is a necessary ingredient of the pure intuition of space and time. I will not discuss the question of whether this is a viable view for our intuition of space. Maybe there is an exegetically acceptable way of reading Kant's remarks about the synthesis of the imagination as just pertaining to our intuition of finite segments of space or as formulating a precondition not for the *intuition* of space but rather only for an intellectually more demanding cognitive state. And maybe it is also phenomenologically plausible that infinite space can be given to us in intuition

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Allais 2009, McLear 2014, Messina 2014, Smyth 2014, Onof and Schulting 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. McLear 2014. <sup>25</sup> See, for example, Grüne 2014, Indregard 2017, Williams 2017.

“at one blow,” i.e., without any synthesis of its parts. However, it seems clear that the strategy fails for the case of the pure intuition of time. The reason is that the synthetic activity of the imagination plays two roles for the intuition of time, that of synthesizing parts to a whole and, via the awareness we have of this activity, that of presenting to us the parts as *succeeding* parts. Even if we could convince ourselves that the synthesizing activity does not need to play the first role for an intuition of infinite time, but only for limited segments of it, it is, however, clear that the second role must also be constitutive for the intuition of infinite time. Whatever it means to have a pure intuition of infinite time, it has to be different from the pure intuition of infinite space or of that of one infinite spatial dimension. This is even more evident if we think, like Kant, that we cannot represent time but by means of a spatial analog. For, as we have seen, this requires us to clarify how time is also different from the analog by which it is represented. Now, time differs from space and its dimensions in that the parts of the former are successive and that of the latter simultaneous. Hence, in order for the intuition of the former to differ from that of the latter, its content has to be able to display succession in some way. However, we have seen that Kant thought that the only way to be aware of succession, be it that of finitely many or infinitely many parts, is by being aware of our activity of successively producing a content in the imagination. Hence, without this activity, there could be no awareness of a specifically *temporal* manifold whatsoever.

The wider lesson of the last remark is that we should not establish our own preferred interpretation of Kant’s account of intuition by means of examples of spatial intuition alone and then wave our hands about its applicability to the intuition of time. Whatever Kant’s account of pure intuition is, it is meant to work both for the case of space and for that of time. And it seems exegetically unavoidable, and maybe also phenomenologically plausible, that to intuit time cannot just mean being presented with something. It involves being active and letting our imagination create content rather than just receiving and grasping it.

*“The Faculty of Intuitions A Priori.”  
Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination*

Günter Zöllner

No psychologist so far has realized that the power of the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception even.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter seeks to elucidate the status and function of the imagination (*Einbildung*) and the power of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) in Kant by focusing on their intrinsic connection with sensibility and the understanding. In particular, this chapter explores the productive character of the imagination in Kant’s critical epistemology, as contained in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and supplemented in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Section 1 draws on Kant’s conceptual metaphors as a clue to the peculiar power of the imagination. Section 2 traces Kant’s definitional taxonomy of the imagination’s powers. Section 3 explores the ambiguous position of the imagination between sensibility and the understanding. Section 4 elucidates the productive potential of the imagination. The focus throughout is on the functional rather than substantial status of the imagination in Kant. Far from undercutting or trumping the Kantian dualism of sensibility and the understanding in favor of an underlying first or a supplementary third force, the imagination emerges as the mind’s power to draw the opposite ends of the cognitive apparatus together and thus ensure their full functioning.

### 1. The Chemistry between Them

Of all the concepts and doctrines introduced or advanced by Kant, perhaps none has proven more lastingly popular and historically influential than his

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, Riga: Hartknoch, 1781, second, revised edition 1787; references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* employ the original pagination of the first and second edition, indicated as “A” and “B,” respectively; here, A 120 note. All translations are my own. The quotation in the title of this contribution is from *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Prussian Academy of Sciences and successors (Berlin, later Berlin and New York: Reimer, later de Gruyter, 1900), henceforth “AA;” here AA 5:190.

account of the imagination. From Hegel to Heidegger, from Schelling to Dilthey, and from the German Romantics to Gadamer and through recent scholarship on Kant's aesthetics and anthropology and the current controversy over Kant's commitment to non-conceptualism, readers of widely varying philosophical persuasions have responded with affirmation and approval to Kant's extensive and diverse treatment of the topic of the imagination, as contained chiefly in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; second, revised edition 1787), the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) and the *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798).

The popular appeal of the topic is not the least due to the departure taken by Kant's account of the imagination from the perceived procedures in other areas and aspects of his work. In general, Kant's philosophical thinking is bent on division and distinction and marked by opposition and separation. Typically, the operative move in Kant's analyses of concepts and issues is dichotomous and results in a whole series of dualisms that govern the architectonic of his systematic thinking: from sensibility and the understanding, through the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* to theoretical and practical reason.

To be sure, Kant also poses and addresses the problem of the unity with regard to the dyads and dualisms that permeate his philosophy. In particular, he seeks to establish unity amidst difference when he maintains that sensibility and the understanding enable knowledge only jointly, that the *a priori* finds its realization only in the *a posteriori*, and that it is one and the same reason that is theoretical in one manner of employment and practical in another kind of use. Yet, in each case, the unity so established is one of uniting a previous disunity. In general, Kant does not maintain prior unity but posterior unification when it comes to overcoming division and distinction. To be sure, for Kant the posteriority of unity with regard to difference is not a matter of temporal sequence but of systematic order and logical structure.

In the exceptional case of the imagination, though, it has seemed to readers past and present that Kant, rather than referring to some subsequent unification or resultant unity, is pointing to an original unity, an antecedent and primordial feature underlying the complex and varied setup of the human mind as the ultimate source of its engagement with the world. In particular, the imagination has seemed suited to overcoming the real rather than merely conceptual distinction effectuated in Kant's critical philosophy between sensibility and the understanding, or between receptivity and spontaneity. Moreover, the conception of the (cognitive) mind's original unity to many seems to be endorsed by Kant's own oblique

reference to a “common root” underlying the division between sensibility and the understanding, notwithstanding his explicit assertion of this possible (“perhaps”) root being “unknown to us” (A 15/B 29).

Considered in their entirety, the revisionist readings of the imagination in Kant reveal more about their authors’ interests and orientations than about Kant’s treatment of the topic, which serves them as a source of inspiration and a point of departure for their own enterprises. Such enterprises are often shaped by an independent or antecedent philosophical agenda that is at best neo-Kantian and at worst pseudo-Kantian. This holds equally for Hegel’s appropriation of the imagination for a philosophy of absolute, infinite subjectivity as for Heidegger’s philosophy of existential, finite subjectivity. Likewise, it holds equally for Fichte’s account of the imagination as operating in between (“hovering”) finite and infinite subjectivity and for Schelling’s account of the imagination as the vehicle for rendering the infinite finite and the absolute conditioned.

Turning back from the post-Kantian concerns with imagination’s inventive interloping between the finite and the infinite to the Kantian text and its historical-systematic context, imagination emerges demystified and demoted, while remaining central and crucial to the critical philosophy in general and to its theoretical branch (“transcendental philosophy,” A 12/B 25) in particular. No longer the linchpin or fulcrum of the entire first *Critique*, the imagination still figures at the very core of Kant’s project of ascertaining the extent – the possibilities as well as the boundaries – of non-empirical, “pure” cognitive claims about objects that arise and hold independent of experience (“synthetic judgments *a priori*,” B 19).

Even after being divested of the magical powers previously attributed to it, the imagination stands out among the powers, faculties, capacities, or forces reckoned by Kant to make up the human mind. This holds especially with regard to the latter’s theoretical use for the cognition of objects. In order to appreciate the standing and the scope of the imagination in Kant’s critical epistemology, it helps to pay close attention to the conceptual metaphors employed by Kant when addressing the status and function of the imagination. For the terms and concepts drawn upon by Kant when introducing and detailing the imagination in its various workings constitute a clandestine self-interpretation on Kant’s part. In particular, the semantic fields that furnish the Kantian discourse about the imagination reveal the analogies, images, and models present in Kant’s mind when formulating the problems as well as the solutions associated with the imagination.

Paying closer attention to the toposes that inform Kant's thinking about the imagination is all the more indicated given Kant's general view on indirect, analogical thinking in matters that elude direct inspection and investigation. Kant himself clearly acknowledges the need to take recourse to images, metaphors, and comparisons when assessing the cognition of non-empirical entities, including the thought entities that figure in philosophy's own discourse. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, when discussing possible ways to render sensible (or intuitive) the supersensible (and hence unintuitable), Kant introduces indirect or "symbolic" representation as an epistemic device that draws on analogies from the sensible world in order to render palpable matters from the intelligible domain (AA 5:351–4). While the specific context in the third *Critique* is the cognitive function of the beautiful as an analogous intuitable representation ("symbol") of the morally good, Kant also cites a number of key terms from philosophy more generally, such as "substance" from Latin "what underlies," to illustrate the widespread use of and even need for symbolic representation in philosophy ("symbolism").

Moreover, Kant argues more generally yet that all linguistic representation of matters, both supersensible and non-sensory, has to take recourse to sensory and sensible analogies. This includes his own critical philosophy, which essentially involves elucidating the non-empirical, necessary, and universal conditions of certain cognitive, conative, and appreciative claims, through the strategic symbolism of the non-sensory. To be sure, the analogies involved in philosophical thinking must not be taken literally. Instead, they are to function as heuristic devices for the articulation of non-sensory matters by sensory means. Moreover, while Kant deems the recourse to symbolism in non-empirical or pure philosophy inevitable, the choice of the symbols, analogies, or metaphors drawn upon by philosophy in general, and by the critical philosophy in particular, must be considered contingent. It should be regarded as informed by the cognitive and cultural horizon within which the symbolism in question is designed, developed, and deployed. Finally, a given set of symbols may not be considered unique and exclusive in its suitability for rendering sensory a given non-sensory matter or issue. It may even prove prudent to mix metaphors in philosophy's strategic symbolism in order to benefit from the diverse elucidating potential of a whole array of suitable semantic fields.

Kant himself shows a clear preference for a limited number of semantic fields from which to draw the analogies, symbols, and metaphors that serve to articulate the core concerns and specific solutions of the critical



philosophy. Moreover, the different semantic fields are chosen with an eye to the epistemic yield to be obtained for a particular problem along with its creative solution, as conceived by Kant. In addition, some of the analogical and symbolic devices deployed by Kant in elucidating the critical philosophy do not operate by way of a direct recourse to experience but engage concepts and doctrines from other established and approved fields of knowledge and areas of investigation, which in turn draw on more concrete comparisons for their own illustration, thus involving the practice of what might be called secondary symbolism.

In Kant's philosophy, in general, and its critical core, in particular, a limited number of metaphorical fields for symbolic representation stand out. First, there is the architectonic imagery of a building, including its foundations, featured by Kant for conveying the non-sensory conception ("idea") of a system of cognitions as well as a system of things so cognized, such as the "system of pure reason," the "system of nature," and the "system of freedom" (A 841/B 869, A 690/B 718, A 815/B 843). Next, there is the conceptual reliance on the sphere of law and politics deemed suitable by Kant for conveying issues of normativity and validation, chiefly involved in the different deductions – the latter itself a legal metaphor ("*quid juris*," A 84/B 116) – in each of the three *Critiques*, but also supplying the repertoire for much of Kant's critical ethics ("practical law," AA 4:462, "legislation," AA 4:403, "will," AA 4:412, "lawgiving will," AA 4:432, "autonomy," AA 4:447, "autocracy," AA 6:383).

Finally, there is the set of conceptual metaphors drawn from contemporary biological theorizing ("natural history") about the generation and regeneration or the production and reproduction of animal life – a field to which Kant himself makes significant methodological and doctrinal contributions in the second part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment. Kant chiefly draws on this lexicon when addressing the complex constitution of cognition in terms of the generic, "transcendental" production of knowledge on the basis of *a priori* elements – "germs" (*Keime*) and "dispositions" (*Anlagen*) – by means of processes of generation and growth (A 66/B 91).

While Kant typically casts the mode of operation of the power of the imagination in organic metaphors ("productive" and "reproductive" power of the imagination), he portrays the precarious placement of the imagination between the two "root" faculties of cognition, viz., sensibility and the understanding, in terms of another emerging science of the day, viz., chemistry. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant names the German physicist and chemist Georg Ernst Stahl (1659–1734), together with

Galilei and Torricelli, as a pioneer of modern experimental science (B XII), specifically citing Stahl's work on metals under conditions of heat. Moreover, he likens the overall procedure of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, considered an "experiment of pure reason," to the chemist's method of "reduction" and "synthetic procedure," by means of which previously separated substances are again united. Analogously, the first *Critique* is introduced as first, in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic, dissociating and then, in the Transcendental Dialectic, reuniting the heterogeneous elements of pure cognition, viz., sensibility and understanding (B XXI note). To be sure, Stahl's chemical theory, which involved recourse to an elusive warmth matter ("phlogiston"), soon was to be replaced by Lavoisier's pioneering work on oxidation, of which Kant took note by the time he published the third *Critique* (AA 6:207).

Still, ancient and modern chemistry agree in the procedural practice to first analyze a given substance into its elementary parts and subsequently synthesize the elementary components into a new whole, thereby demonstrating the elements to be so heterogeneous that they do not separate and recombine physically – by mechanical means – but only chemically, through processes such as burning or oxidation. Chemistry, old and new, thus provides Kant with a serviceable analogy for the twin epistemological procedures of cognition's decomposition into heterogeneous elements and their recombination into a complexly fused unity. In particular, chemistry provides Kant with a scientifically inspired epistemological model according to which the (power of the) imagination is the result of a quasi-chemical procedure of uniting the heterogeneous elements of sensibility and the understanding to form an entirely new entity.

Kant's chemical account of the imagination, as employed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is reinforced by the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, a textbook published late in Kant's life after his retirement from teaching, but based on the lectures on anthropology he had held, on a yearly basis, since the early 1770s. In the printed version of the *Anthropology*, when discussing the status and function of the power of the imagination, Kant draws on the chemical concept of affinity (*affinitas*, *Verwandtschaft*), which designates the tendency of certain natural materials specifically different from each other to combine with each other and bring about something entirely new (AA 7:177).

In light of the chemical concept of affinity, as applied by Kant himself to the operations of the power of the imagination, the latter of which comprise "formation" (*Bildung*) and "association" (*Beigesellung*, AA 7:174 and 176), Kant's assignment of the imagination to "some third" (*ein Drittes*,

A 138/B 177) connecting sensibility and the understanding therefore should not be taken to indicate a further feature – chemically speaking, a third element – to be added to a previously identified duality. Rather, the quasi-chemical character of the imagination resides in its resulting nature, as something new and different emerging out of the intense fusion of the two earlier established elements. Moreover, Kant’s own connection, in the *Anthropology*, of the chemistry of conjunction with the natural phenomenon of sexual (re-)generation establishes an immediate connection to the genuinely productive character of the imagination under consideration in the first *Critique* (AA 7:177 note).

## 2. Classifying and Defining

Kant’s detailed discussion of the imagination occurs in two places with a different systematic context each. The *Critique of Pure Reason* draws on the imagination and its power in an account of the cognitive resources for the *a priori* cognition of objects. Accordingly, the specific functionality of the imagination consists in its contribution, along with that of other cognitive capacities, to making possible such a kind of cognition in the first place. By contrast, the *Anthropology* is concerned with the general contribution of the imagination to all kinds of cognition, including false or illusory cognitions, as in the case of dreams or deceptions. To be sure, the two accounts do not contradict each other and, in fact, involve a considerable amount of overlap. For one, the *Critique of Pure Reason* ascends to the pure, “transcendental” functions of the imagination by way of the latter’s ordinary, “empirical” mode of engagement. Moreover, the *Anthropology* includes among its discussion of the imagination, albeit only marginally, the latter’s special use in the context of *a priori* cognition.

Still, there remains a noteworthy difference between the accounts of the imagination in the two works – a difference more of presentation, though, than of doctrine and one that attests to the systematic ambiguity of the imagination in Kant. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the imagination is formally featured in the work’s Transcendental Logic, which deals with the forms and rules of thinking (A 95–130 and B 129–69; A 137/B 176–A 147/B 187). By contrast, in the *Anthropology* the imagination is treated under the heading of sensibility (AA 5:167–90), which would correspond to its allocation under the Transcendental Aesthetic of the first *Critique*.

There are two shared features that emerge from Kant’s twofold treatment of the imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Anthropology*, one classificatory and the other definitional. In the *Anthropology*

Kant distinguishes "productive" or "poetic" (*dichtend*) and "reproductive" or merely "recollecting" (*zurückrufend*) imagination (AA 7:167). In the former capacity, the imagination furnishes particular representation ("intuitions") of things not actually present to the senses, neither presently nor formerly, though typically based on previous cognitive encounters that are subsequently rearranged in the imagination. By contrast, reproductive imagination provides exact copies of the things previously encountered, which are rendered in the imagination without poetic license. Terminologically, Kant also differentiates between the productive power of the imagination exercised "unintentionally" (*unwillkürlich*) and labeled "phantasy" (*Phantasie*), and the ordinary, intentional use of that power in "imagination" (*Einbildung*) properly so called (AA 7:167).

In his classificatory account of the imagination in the *Anthropology*, Kant further distinguishes three operative modes of the productive or rather "poetic faculty of the imagination" (*Dichtungsvermögen*), each involving a different principle for the productive composition of intuitions (AA 7:174). First, there is the formative power of spatial imagination (*imaginatio plastica*); second, the associating power of temporal imagination (*beigesellend*); and third, the productive imagination of affinity (*Verwandtschaft*), which joins representations in view of the origination (*Abstammung*) they have in common (AA 7:174–7). In the horizon of the *Anthropology*, the three principles operative behind the productive power of the imagination are psychological in character and empirical in scope.

The *Anthropology*, however, also refers to the power that the imagination possesses for originally exhibiting spatial and temporal intuitions prior to any experience (*exhibitio originaria*) (AA 7:167). It even treats the pure, spatiotemporal imagination as the one genuine case of the imagination's productive power. By contrast, according to Kant, all other use of the productive power of the imagination involves material furnished by antecedent experience, rendering the productive power of the imagination both empirically based and empirically informed. To be sure, even in empirically productive imagination the previously provided material is not simply reproduced but originally or productively reconfigured in space, re-associated in time or rejoined on the basis of affinity.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* also operates with the classificatory scheme of imagination's productive and reproductive use. While in the *Anthropology* the focus is on the imagination's productive processing of empirically given cognitions, the focus in the first *Critique* is on elucidating the productive power of the imagination with regard to the *a priori*

intuitions of space and time. In particular, the empirically productive power of the imagination serves as the guiding thread for the latter's purely productive power (A 98–114). In the process, the threefold distinction of the productive power of the imagination with regard to the spatial formation, the temporal association, and the original affinity of cognitive features ("representation") introduced in the *Anthropology* is replaced by a comprehensive cognitive classification that involves, in addition to the power of the imagination, sense (or intuition), and the understanding (A 97f., A 115).

The central text for Kant's discussion of the purely productive power of the imagination in the first *Critique* is the Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding, which assesses the bearing of the categories on the constitution of objective cognition (knowledge) and argues for their essential function in making possible the cognition of objects along with the objects so cognized. Due to Kant's extensive reworking of significant parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the work's second edition, the Transcendental Deduction exists in two versions, which differ in approach and emphasis. The A-edition deals in detail with the subjective sources underlying the cognition of objects, offering an entire cognitive psychology in the service of the first *Critique*'s epistemological project. By contrast, the B-edition places more stress on the logical dimension of key cognitive claims and subordinates the psychological features under the required epistemological functions. Still, the difference between the two versions of the Transcendental Deduction is presentational and methodological rather than doctrinal and substantial, as indicated by Kant himself in the Preface to the second edition (B XXXVIIf).

In the A-edition of the Transcendental Deduction, the productive power of the imagination is identified with the recollection of representations (A 100–2), which, while having passed by in the temporal sequence of cognitive consciousness, are artificially retained and thereby brought together ("synthesis"). Kant's concern here is not with the factual retention of actual mental events ("reproduction"), as in a "phenomenology of internal time-consciousness" (Husserl). Rather productive imagination is drawn upon as a functional requirement for moving from successive states of consciousness to the correlated generic, "transcendental" consciousness of a numerically identical object for a numerically identical self-conscious subject.

Kant's technical term for the integrated consciousness of self and object – of self-consciousness in object consciousness and vice versa – is "apperception," more precisely, "transcendental apperception," as opposed

to the particular, "empirical apperception" involved in individual acts of awareness (A 106f). According to the first edition version, the productive power of the imagination ultimately required is the non-empirical or pure power of the imagination to actively associate cognitive states based on their prior presentment through sense and in preparation of their subsequent integration into the cognition of an object (in general) for a subject (in general) through the apperceptive understanding.

The second key feature of the power of the imagination, in addition to the classificatory division into productive and reproductive imagination, to be found in both the *Anthropology* and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, turns on the distinction of the imagination from perception. According to the largely empiricist and generally naturalist outlook of the *Anthropology*, imagination's particular power, both in its productive and reproductive mode, consists in its ability to present mental images or imaginings – in particular, singular such items ("intuitions") – that are not immediately given through perception (AA 7:167). While the definition applies to both the productive and the reproductive power of the imagination, Kant is more concerned with the imaginative production of what exceeds the previously given than with the latter's replicating retrieval.

Imagination's definitional capacity for cognitively representing what is absent depends on the overcoming of a temporal transition but is not thereby limited to a temporally defined content. On Kant's account in the *Anthropology*, the imaginatively presented representations involve temporal as well as spatial and other relational features, based on the operation on the three imaginative principles of configuration, association, and affinity detailed earlier in this chapter. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the imagination's power to render the absent present is particularly pertinent given the work's methodical abstraction from anything empirical. Rather than derivatively reproducing or originally producing representations on the basis of empirical intuitions given in past perceptions, the pure power of the imagination operates on a virtual *a priori* given material of spatio-temporal arrays ("manifold") by lending structure to the manifold ("synthesis") and thus preparing the synthesized manifold for conceptual articulation through the apperceptive understanding ("unity").

In the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the productive power of the imagination in its pure mode of employment, devoid of past empirical input, thus assumes an anticipatory character. As conveyed by Kant's characteristic phrase "possible experience," which refers to an experience to be had only *a posteriori* but made possible *a priori*, viz., by the pure forms of intuiting and thinking, the imagination's pure production is

disengaged from actual experience past, present, or future and solely concerned with the principal enabling of any and all such experience. Accordingly, what is to be rendered present by pure imagination is not some actual entity or event to be encountered at a point in time but the very possibility of such an encounter.

### 3. From Capacity to Faculty

Kant's critical theoretical philosophy – as contained chiefly in the *Critique of Pure Reason* – turns on the epistemological distinction between sensibility, which delivers singular representations or intuitions, and the understanding, which contributes general representations or concepts. Moreover, Kant denies, with regard to human beings, both the possibility of non-sensory, intellectual intuition and the possibility of a non-conceptual, intuitive understanding (A 67f./B 92f.). This leaves sensible intuitions and discursive concepts as the only kinds of theoretical cognition. On Kant's account, though, such intuitions and such concepts each by themselves are incapable of affording a valid cognition of objects. As Kant famously puts it: (discursive) concepts without (sensible) intuition lack content or are “empty,” and (sensible) intuitions without (discursive) concepts do not refer to objects or are “blind” (A 51/B 75). In order for there to be valid cognition of objects, (sensory) intuitions and (discursive) concepts have to complement each other. This, in turn, requires that their respective cognitive powers, viz., sensibility and the understanding, be united or unified.

The hylomorphic model of cognition drawn upon by Kant, according to which intuitions provide cognitive content and concepts furnish cognitive form, is complicated though by two circumstances peculiar to the epistemology of the first *Critique*. First, Kant's chief concern is not with empirical cognition, in which the senses provide a cognitive matter subsequently to be processed by logical or psychological devices, as in empiricist and neo-empiricist epistemology. Instead, Kant's declared focus is on the *a priori* cognition of objects, which concerns forms and features holding independent of experience and therefore exceeding empirical confirmation or disconfirmation. Second, sensibility in Kant is not exhausted by the provision of content (“sensations”) but includes its own pure cognitive forms (“forms of sensibility”), viz., space and time, and its own mode of representation, viz., the direct representation of particulars (“intuition”).

The focus on *a priori* objectively valid cognition together with the presence of sensible cognitive forms introduce two problems into the basic



hylomorphic model of cognition. The assumed *a priori* character of the cognitions under consideration rules out an empiricist understanding of matter as sheer sensory data, and the formal character of sensibility rules out tracking all cognitive form to logical formation. The complications added to the basic hylomorphic model weigh all the heavier given Kant's modal distinction between content-contributing sensibility as essentially passive ("receptivity") and the form-furnishing understanding as essentially active ("spontaneity"). Kant's critical epistemology has to reckon with a kind of content that is not given *a posteriori* and with a type of form that is not imposed spontaneously.

In response to these structural and strategic challenges Kant introduces, first, a specifically *a priori* (rather than *a posteriori*) content in the guise of the "pure manifold" of space and time and, second, a form of intuition that is itself an intuition, viz., the "pure intuition" of space and time (A 20/B 34f.). On Kant's account in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the pure spatiotemporal manifold that space and time contain and the pure intuitions that space and time themselves are must be considered given rather than made and thus pertaining to receptivity rather than to spontaneity.

But even after the innovative devices of the pure manifold of space and time and the pure intuitions of space and time are introduced, questions remain and problems arise for Kant's critical account of cognition. In particular, the pure manifold of space and time that is to serve as *a priori* content seems empty of any actual content to the point of being entirely formal. Moreover, the formal character of the pure intuitions of space and time, along with that of the pure manifold they contain, seems to introduce into the sphere sensibility, previously defined by its sheer receptivity, the feature of formation and hence an element of activity or spontaneity, previously assigned exclusively to the understanding. Thus Kant's modifications of the hylomorphic model of cognition seem to threaten the very integrity of the Transcendental Aesthetic and to blur its demarcation from the Transcendental Analytic, thereby undermining the very distinction – between sensibility and the understanding – on which the *Critique of Pure Reason* turns.

Yet collapsing the fundamental distinction between sensibility and the understanding is unacceptable to Kant, given the general goal of the *Critique of Pure Reason* of ascertaining and maintaining, once and for all, the respective bounds of sense and reason – a boundary determination deemed crucial, even indispensable for salvaging freedom, and morality along with it, in the face of the thoroughgoing determinism reigning



among the objects in space and time (B XXIV-XXX). On Kant's strategic outlook, giving up the heterogeneity of sensibility and the understanding would result in the natural world colonizing the moral world, in determinism defeating freedom, and in natural science replacing moral science.

Under those circumstances, Kant is in need of identifying and introducing form features that are specifically different from those contributed by the spontaneity of the understanding and that reside in pure (sensible) intuition and in its intuited content, viz., the pure manifold of space and time. To be sure, the sought formal features are difficult to separate from their ordinary occurrence in the context of the further formation provided by the intellect and need to be extracted in artificial procedures of abstraction and isolation. Accordingly, the items so introduced are functional features of objectively valid *a priori* cognition rather than naturally occurring and phenomenologically present facts of consciousness or acts of mentation.

It is in this specific context of a strategically indicated and artificially introduced innovation that Kant's critical epistemology resorts to the imagination as a mode of cognition and to the power of the imagination as a covering concept for the former's range of operations. Accordingly, the imagination along with its associated power, as introduced and implemented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, should not be taken as a reductionist maneuver on Kant's part intent on replacing the duality of sensibility and the understanding with a single, simple root. Nor does the systematic and architectonic recourse to the imagination amount to introducing a further, third source of cognition next to – or rather, in between – sensibility and the understanding. Far from involving a monadic unity or a dialectical triplicity, the (power of the) imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* consists in overcoming a dualism that cannot be abolished but can only be bridged – by purposively going back and forth between the specifically different basic cognitive capacities and their epistemic domains.

On such a functionalist reading, which draws on the imagination for bridging a gap that can be crossed but not filled and for dealing with a difference that can be overcome but not obliterated, the power of the imagination is not a hidden or secret force, much less a super power of the mind to do something that neither sensibility nor the understanding can accomplish. Rather it is the ability to link, at a most fundamental level, the originally distinct operations of sensibility and the understanding. In particular, the imagination's bridging power links the receptivity involved in having intuitions and the spontaneity involved in conceptualizing those intuitions, as it links, inversely, the formation of concepts with their employment in the determination of intuitions.

Given the bridging function of the imagination, the range of its power chiefly consists in immersing the understanding in sensibility and in involving sensibility in the understanding. To be sure, the mutual involvement of sensibility and the understanding under the operation of the imagination is obscured by the external architectonics of the first *Critique*, which treats the forms and principles of sensibility and of the understanding in separate sections, viz., the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic. But on closer inspection, the Transcendental Logic in its two parts, the Transcendental Analytic and the Transcendental Dialectic, is as much concerned with the forms and rules of thinking as with the impact that the yield of the Transcendental Aesthetic – viz., the pure manifold of space and time and the pure intuitions of space and time – exercises on the functionality of Transcendental Logic's own forms and rules.

The functionalist character of the imagination and its power is further obscured by the differences between the treatments of the topic in the two original editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially in the Transcendental Deduction, the entire text of which was revised by Kant for the work's second edition. In particular, the more overtly psychological approach of the first edition Deduction, together with the latter's penchant for triple divisions – sense, imagination, understanding; synopsis, synthesis, unity; apprehension, association, apperception (A 97, A 115) – could be taken to convey a genuine, separate, third force intervening between sensibility and the understanding. By contrast, the second edition version of the deduction seems to more clearly assign the imagination (if not in terms of its origin, then with regard to its cognitive engagement) to the exercise of the understanding (B 150–2).

The differences in details and emphases notwithstanding, both versions of the Deductions are compatible though with a generally functionalist understanding of the power of the imagination. Moreover, considered together, the two versions of the Deduction strongly suggest such a reading, with the first edition version focusing on the continuity between apprehension and apperception afforded by the imagination and the second edition version reversely extending the influence of the understanding, "under the designation" (B 153) of the power of the imagination, deep into the field of sensibility and its cognitive conveyances, viz., the intuitions.

The two-sided orientation and operation that accrues to the imagination under its functionalist understanding – its essential function as well as functional essence as an interloper between sensibility and the

understanding – is aptly conveyed by Kant’s definition of the (power of the) imagination as a “*faculty* of intuitions” (*Vermögen der Anschauungen*) (AA 5:190; 5:287; emphasis added). Despite its primary pertinence to intuitions, which it renders in the imagination rather than in perception, the power in question also involves spontaneity, hence an activist “*faculty*” (*Vermögen*) rather than mere receptivity or a passivist “*capacity*” (*Fähigkeit*) in its imaging of intuitions. Kant may not admit an understanding that as such, hence intellectually, intuits. But he admits and even requires an understanding that, by means of the imagination’s power, takes up and takes over intuitions and brings them under its sway.

#### 4. Productive, Not Creative

The division of labor between intuitions and concepts established in the *Critique of Pure Reason* combines functional differentiation with complementary cooperation. Semantically speaking, intuitions furnish singular reference, while concepts refer in a general way. Logically speaking, intuitions are particulars, while concepts have the status of universals. Epistemologically put, intuitions furnish features of the object, while concepts refer to the objects themselves and as such. The diverse distinctions between intuitions and concepts in Kant are based on the divergent part-whole relations involved in the two types of cognition. Moreover, in both cases, the peculiar mereological properties of each kind are based on the respective non-empirical, “pure” type, viz., the pure intuitions (space and time) and the pure concepts of the understanding (categories).

In the case of pure intuitions, according to Kant, the representation of the whole precedes that of the parts. First and originally, space and time are all-encompassing and, to that extent, infinite wholes with regard to which all particular parts of space and time are but limitations that parcel out this or that region of space or stretch of time. Accordingly, in the case of space and time qua pure intuitions, the parts are contained *in* the whole. Moreover, the part-whole relation pertaining to space and time qua pure intuitions carries over to anything intuited in space and time through empirical intuitions involving the material occupation of a region of space or a stretch of time (A 24f./B 39 and A 31f./B 47f.).

By contrast, in the case of concepts, the parts are the partial representations of a whole formed by the representation of the entire object. Accordingly, the concepts, qua partial representations, are not contained in the whole (the object), as in intuition. Rather the whole falls *under* the concept, such that a number of objects, all of which share the concept in question as a partial representation, fall under the same, common concept.

Briefly put, particular intuitions are contained in space and time, particular objects fall under concepts (B 133f. and B 136f.).

The different mereology underlying intuitions and concepts in Kant makes the relation between intuitions and concepts an interaction of separate but complementary basic functions. In particular, the same cognitive item may be subject to two (or more) functional treatments, as when something first functions as an intuition (e.g., this round, this red) and subsequently assumes the function of a concept (e.g., the round, the red). In this perspective, sensibility and the understanding relate to the same material – generally speaking, a spatiotemporal manifold – that is subject to an ordered sequence of functional treatments, first serving as indicator of particulars (through intuitions) and then as prepared material for universal predication (by means of concepts). The composite yield of the graduated functional operations is complete cognition, in the sense of a valid reference to objects known as such, distinct both from each other and from the knower.

On the proposed functionalist reading of the dualism of intuitions and concepts, the epistemological challenge to be faced by Kant is not simply the subsequent joining of two originally distinct, heterogenous kinds of cognition by way of some connecting device, such as an imaginative – or rather, imaginary – power of the imagination. The real issue to address is the alternative access to be had to one and the same cognitive source material – neutrally put, some manifold – which, in one regard, is to yield spatial-temporally featured particulars and, in another regard, conceptually determined universal properties. Neither set of specifics pertains to the source material as such but must be brought to bear on the latter by way of functions (powers, forces, faculties) exercised upon it.

At one level, which comes first in a systematic rather than chronological order, there is the formal framework of space and time as a general grid or proto-structure of possible, virtual places and times in which any given intuition is to be situated. Then there is the further formal feature of the categorial system by means of which the spatiotemporally given intuitions are referred to an object for the purpose of providing the latter with determinations under the guise of coordinated and correlated intuitions of it. Moreover, the twofold functionalism of intuiting and understanding is already operative at the basic level of a manifold being given *a priori* and hence still devoid of empirical content ("sensations") and its conceptual yield ("empirical concepts").

On Kant's assessment, the twofold *a priori* functionality of intuitions and concepts requires the coordinated access of the two basic functional forms to their common source material. Therefore, the given manifold has

to be such that it can be intuited as well as thought: taken up into the forms of intuition and subject to the forms of thinking. Moreover, the application of the two kinds of cognitive forms involves two different modes of forming: a passive uptake in the case of intuition (receptivity) and an active unifying in the case of concepts (spontaneity). Also, neither formation is to remain external to the source material upon which it is exercised. Rather, the form and the matter have to become one in a genuine hylomorphic unit. While, *per definitionem*, not already containing intuitional or conceptual features as such, the (pure) manifold, on Kant's account, therefore has to be at least amenable to, and to that extent even prepared for, the application of either kind of form and for the fusion with it.

Given the basic setup of an epistemic first matter (the manifold) and a duality of epistemic forms (space and time; the categories) that function in specifically different ways (receptivity, spontaneity) – all of which occurs or operates at an *a priori* level – the power of the imagination serves as a unifying device for the general uptake of a given material into the combined cognitive forms. In Kant's assessment, already at the level of sheer receptivity, the cognitive uptake of the given into consciousness, termed "perception" (*Wahrnehmung, Perzeption*), involves the imagination (A 120 note); more specifically, it involves the latter's power to retain fleeting intuitional representations, whether empirically enriched by sensations (empirical intuition) or artificially reduced to sheer sensible form (pure intuition). Otherwise, the manifold representations would vanish, one after the other, and amount to nothing in consciousness (A 120).

Once retained in the imagination and forming a standing image rather than a fleeting flow, the manifold also needs to be gathered and held together – a function again exercised by the imagination's power to render images qua intuitional wholes determinable by subsequent conceptual determination. Kant's technical term for the collection of cognitions is "synthesis," (A 99, B 129f.) in view of the imaginative gathering's force to bring about a connection among plural items. In the two original editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant offers two accounts of the synthesis of the manifold. The first one, to be found in the first edition, assigns this synthesis to the power of the imagination itself, which thereby is credited with a spontaneity of sorts. By contrast, the second edition assigns it to the understanding, which thus is treated as the sole purveyor of cognitive conjunction, albeit exercised "under the designation" of the power of the imagination in the case of the synthesis pertaining to the latter (A 100–2 and B 153f.).

More specifically, Kant distinguishes, in the second edition version of the Transcendental Deduction, between the purely conceptual synthesis, exercised by the understanding, independent of sensibility and the imagination, called "intellectual synthesis" (*synthesis intellectualis*), and the latter's application to the manifold of space and time, undertaken by the productive power of the imagination and resulting in a "figurative synthesis" (*synthesis figurativa*, B 151). The power of the imagination, as manifest in figurative synthesis, thus is portrayed as positioned in between and reflecting features both of sensibility and of the understanding. In terms of its matter, the imagination draws on the particular (pure or empirical) conveyances of sensibility. From the standpoint of form, or rather formation, the imagination is informed by the synthetically unifying power of the understanding.

On Kant's considered view then, as conveyed by the reworking of the Transcendental Deduction in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the imagination in its operational essence is the understanding itself, insofar as the latter immerses itself and its synthetic activity in the manifold of intuition. Inversely, though, the understanding – in its purely intellectual, overtly conceptual activity – can be viewed as an abstraction from the *a priori* synthetic operation of the imagination, which is first exercised without recourse to conceptual determination ("a blind though indispensable function of the soul," A 78/B 103) and subsequently rendered conceptually clear and distinct in terms of objects positioned in space and time and endowed with properties.

The clandestine essential, though not numerical, identity of the imagination and the understanding, eventually made explicit by Kant, also holds for the introduction of unity into the synthetic manifold. For one, there simply cannot be any synthesis without a unity underlying the activity of synthesizing (B 130f.). On Kant's account, it is insufficient to gather manifold representation simply by recalling and recollecting them in the imagination. The gatherings also need to be held together or grasped as a whole, which requires criteria for sorting through a given manifold in view of its items belonging to one and the same whole of representations (A 103f. and B 133). For Kant, such synthetic unification of a given manifold requires the basic functions of unity qua unification represented by the forms of judgment and their conceptual counterparts, viz., the categorial forms of thinking.

While Kant does not attribute unification as such to the synthetic power of the imagination, assigning it instead to the understanding's power of conceptual "recognition" (*Rekognition im Begriffe*, A 103), he considers the

very operation of the imagination impossible without the underlying unity functions of the understanding. Again, the functional presence of the understanding reaches deep into the operation of the imagination, just as reversely the imagination with its power to present intuitions *a priori*, in advance and independent of them being given *a posteriori*, furnishes an *a priori* material (“transcendental content,” A 79/B 105) to a purely intellectual formative faculty, the understanding, that would otherwise lack actual application and real engagement.

While assigning to the power of the imagination, in general, and to its productive power, in particular, a fundamental and far-reaching role in the constitution of objectively valid cognition, Kant is equally keen on ascertaining the limitations and restrictions under which the imagination operates. Given the intermediary, even ambivalent position of the imagination between sensibility and the understanding, the boundaries involved consist, on the one side, in the need for material provisions, however general and minimal, to be furnished by sensibility and, on the other side, in the requirement of form functions for synthetic unification to be supplied by the understanding. Specifically, with regard to the purely productive power of the imagination, Kant is careful to stress that the contribution of the imagination to a given manifold, while being “productive,” in a technical sense to be specified, is not “creative” (*schöpferisch*, AA 7:168), as though the synthetic form imposed by the imagination were absolute and involved a *creatio ex nihilo*.

By terming the originary power of the imagination “productive” – rather than “creative” or “inventive,” as the poetic or artistic function of the imagination might have suggested – Kant is alluding to an analogous case of limited novelty in the contribution made by another power or faculty. The comparable case that inspires Kant’s conceptual metaphor is not located in the field of epistemology, though, but in the contemporary emerging life sciences, at the time, not yet called “biology” but covered by the traditional term “natural history.” In eighteenth-century theorizing about the generation and growth of living beings, “production” refers to the bringing forth (this being the literal meaning of the Latin verb *producere*) of a new exemplar of a species, including its maturation into an adult shape. On the particular view favored by Kant, viz., epigeneticism (as opposed to preformationism), the new exemplar is not actually performed in its germinal antecedent (as preformationism holds) but only virtually prepared by way of “dispositions” (*Anlagen*) and “germs” (*Keime*) that require actualization in order to emerge as something new without any actual prior existence (AA 5:422–5).

In transferring the terminology and conceptuality of an epigenetic "product" (rather than a preformed "educt") to the genuinely generative power of the imagination, Kant combines the attribution of novelty with the reminder of the latter's virtual basis in the manifold's disposition for subsequent development (under the powerful influence of the imagination and its guiding force, the understanding). Rather than freely adding some entirely own features to an amorphous prime matter of cognition, the imagination – even in its purely productive use – is bound by the material at hand. To be sure, the binding force of the given manifold does not reduce the productive power of the imagination to sheer replication, as in the counter case of reproductive imagination. Still, Kant considers the exercise of the imagination's productive power limited to certain modes and manners that are predelineated, in a virtual vein, by the very nature of the manifold, including the latter's proto-properties as a manifold of (as yet) formally undetermined and materially empty space and time.

The exact extent of the binding force that the (pure) manifold exercises upon on the productive power of the imagination is an issue that bears directly on the nature of Kantian idealism. If the power of imagination is to be genuinely productive, rather than merely reproductive, then the spatiotemporal order and the lawful structure of the objects of (possible) experience superseding it cannot be a mere mental imitation of an order previously existing among the things (in) themselves. Rather, the experience of objects, along with the objects so experienced, must be the result of a specifically productive engagement, carried out by the imagination, of *a priori* formative principles on the part sensibility and the understanding with a material the take-up of which guides that application without imposing on it and directs it without prescribing it.



## *Unity in Variety*

### *Theoretical, Practical, and Aesthetic Reason in Kant*

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Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the young Friedrich Schlegel wrote: “The end of humanity is . . . to achieve harmony in knowing, doing and enjoying” (*On the Study of Greek Poetry*, *KA*, I: 627). Rather than an isolated remark, Schlegel here gives voice to a fundamental commitment of Kant’s fellow Romantics to the unity of knowledge, action, and pleasure.

The German Romantics’ concern with this unity largely explains their fascination with Kant’s third *Critique*. For it is in this work that Kant introduced theoretical, practical, and aesthetic judgments as the signature judgments of the three “high” or “intellectual” faculties of the mind: the understanding, reason, and the power of judgment.<sup>1</sup> On the view he presented in this text, the understanding grounds the faculty of theoretical cognition, reason grounds the faculty of desire, and the power of judgment grounds the faculty of pleasure and displeasure.<sup>2</sup> Thus, knowing appears as the achievement of theoretical reason, doing as the achievement of the will or practical reason,<sup>3</sup> and enjoying or the capacity to feel pleasure and

<sup>1</sup> I focus on *this* distinction of judgments, rather than the better-known distinction between reflecting and determining judgments (e.g., 5:179), because the passages I will shortly introduce demonstrate that, even though aesthetic judgment is an exercise of reflecting judgment and theoretical and practical judgments are exercises of determining judgment, it is these three judgments that are *the* three signature judgments of the mind. This means also that Kant takes *aesthetic* judgment (rather than the other varieties of reflecting judgment) to be both the paradigmatic exercise of the power of judgment, and the proper analogue of theoretical and practical judgments. (Cf. Konstantin Pollok, *Kant’s Theory of Normativity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017], ch. 9.) Here I cannot fully explain why Kant regards these three as exhausting “all our judgments,” and how he consequently views the relations of the other varieties of judgment to these three. Suffice it to say that (1) it is fundamentally through the forms of these three judgments that human beings constitute themselves as the rational beings that they are, and that (2) any other kind of judgment in Kant’s corpus is understood in relation to these three. (For example, “the logical judging of nature” [5:169] and teleological judgment, which are also reflecting judgments, are exercises of “the theoretical part of philosophy” [5:170].)

<sup>2</sup> E.g., *KU*, FI, 20:208, 5:167–9. On the importance and non-psychological nature of Kant’s so-called faculty talk, see my *A Matter of Form: The Significance of Kant’s Judgment of Taste* (ms.).

<sup>3</sup> Practical reason is still a source of a peculiar kind of *knowing*: practical knowledge (e.g., *KU*, 5:167, *KPV*, 5:58).

displeasure as the achievement of a third peculiar rational capacity: the power of judgment, whose *a priori* principle grounds the faculty of pleasure and displeasure.

Of course, Kant had been concerned with the unity of knowing and doing, that is, with the unity of theoretical and practical reason, long before the writing of the third *Critique*.<sup>4</sup> Yet, it is only in the third *Critique* that Schlegel's "enjoying" comes onto the stage. Here it appears both as that which has to be unified with the theoretical and practical uses of reason into one "system of all the faculties of the human mind" (20:205) – of rationality as it is irreducible to "rational cognition" (5:171, 20:195) – and as the key to the unity of the other two.<sup>5</sup> The power of judgment and the faculty of pleasure and displeasure, which the former grounds – primarily in exercising aesthetic judgment – now appear as crucial for the unity of seemingly irreconcilable realms: the realm of freedom, the domain of practical reason, and the realm of nature, the domain of theoretical reason (e.g., FI, 20:202).

Interestingly enough, though, it is exactly where Kant explains and emphasizes the unity of the theoretical, the practical, *and* the aesthetic aspects of rationality that he also stresses their irreducibility to one another and their categorical differences. He claims, for example, that although theoretical judgment, practical judgment, and the judgment of taste are all *judgments*, since they belong to formally different faculties, each functions differently even as a judgment, and none of them can be reduced to any of the others: "The judgments that arise in this way from a priori principles peculiar to each of the fundamental faculties of the mind are theoretical, aesthetic and practical judgments" (FI, 20:246).<sup>6</sup> The attempt to "explain this distinction as merely illusory and to reduce all the faculties to the mere faculty of cognition . . . this attempt to bring unity into the multiplicity of faculties" (KU, FI, 20:206), while ignoring their categorical differences, is "futile" [*vergeblich*].

The main task of this chapter is to explore Kant's understanding of what unites the three signature judgments of the fundamental faculties of the

<sup>4</sup> E.g., "Letter to Christian Garve, 21 September 1798," *KRV*, Axiii and A642/B670-A668/B696.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant on the Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason," *Review of Metaphysics* (1998) 52/2:500–8.

<sup>6</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the "judgment of taste" as "aesthetic judgment," even though Kant does not restrict the term "aesthetic" only to judgments of beauty, sublimity, and beautiful art but regards judgments of the agreeable as "aesthetic judgments of sense." Additionally, I will focus only on judgments of beauty and beautiful art (to the exclusion of judgments of sublimity), and ignore their differences.

mind *in a way that preserves their fundamental differences*; differences, as we will see, in *kind* not only in degree; or, as I explain in the following, differences in *form*. This means that, rather than focusing on what harmonizes the theoretical and practical uses of reason – like the bulk of the literature on the so-called problem of the “unity of reason” – this chapter raises a different, though related, set of questions both about the unity and about “the multiplicity” of reason. The overarching aim of the chapter is twofold: I hope to show that (1) the Schlegelian unity of knowing, doing, and enjoying is not only inspired by Kant, but is *in* Kant’s own writings, and that (2) (perhaps in contradistinction to the Romantic imperative) Kant understands this unity as a unity within a categorical variety. Even though reason, for him, has only two material applications and thus two stems of knowledge, he also holds that theoretical judgment, practical judgment, and aesthetic judgment are the paradigmatic judgments of three formally different and irreducible rational capacities.

To understand the unity in this multiplicity we need to appeal to the imagination. This is because lawfulness turns out to be an essential mark of rationality, or of the “high” aspects of the mind. But, for Kant, *human* beings can be lawful, thus rational, in and of their world, only insofar as they are also imaginative. It is the imagination that allows us to be rational in our empirical world: to be *rational animals*.

## 1. Unity

Kant’s faith in both reason’s identity with itself<sup>7</sup> and its “perfect unity” (*KRV*, Axiii) had been long lasting. For example, while arguing for the primacy of practical reason, Kant stresses that this is not the primacy of one reason over another, but of one rational “perspective” over another in one and the same reason (*KPV*, 5:121). In this passage, just as in the preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (of *theoretical* reason, 5:167), Kant emphasizes not only the identity of reason but also, “the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition . . . union [that] is not *contingent* and discretionary but based a priori on reason itself and therefore *necessary*” (*ibid.*).

Yet, what exactly we are talking about when we speak of the “unity of reason” is not fully clear. The unity of reason, in Kant, is said in many ways, and what needs to be explained, when one tries to explain the unity of reason, depends on the particular sense of unity at stake.

<sup>7</sup> See Stephen Engstrom, “The Identity of Reason” (ms.).

For example, in the passage from the second *Critique* I just introduced, Kant seems to explain the unity of reason primarily in terms of a certain kind of *coordination*. The thought seems to be this: Since reason is an identity, it cannot be in conflict with itself. This is not because it may violate the principle of non-contradiction *per se*, but something like the transcendental principle of non-contradiction: The worry is not that the propositional contents of two different kinds of judgment should contradict each other, but that the interests of these two “uses” (e.g., *KPV*, 5:115) or “applications” of rational cognition should contradict each other. It is the principles that contain the conditions of the possibility of exercising these two kinds of cognition that should not “contradict one another” (*KPV*, 5:120).

The worry about this coordination is central in the third *Critique* too, where Kant is concerned primarily with the possibility of *harmony* between two opposing realms or aspects of the self – nature and freedom. May nature and freedom harmonize so as to constitute one cooperative and systematic whole?

Unsurprisingly, commentators exploring the unity of reason tend to focus on the worries regarding consistency and harmony. After all, Kant’s repeated concerns regarding these related senses of unity are grounded in the specter awaiting us if these kinds of unity turn out to be unfeasible. If harmony between theoretical reason and practical reason<sup>8</sup> is unachievable, not only would the empirical self as we know it be threatened with disunity, but the absolute demand of reason – the demand to strive after the highest good – would turn out to be empty, and the moral law would “in itself be false” (*KU*, 5:114).

Yet, urgent as this worry is, what Kant means by “unity” when he speaks of the “unity of reason” cannot be reduced to “harmony” and “consistency.” More is at stake.

In this chapter, I will focus on a different sense of unity: unity as a *commonality*. The unity at stake provides the beginning of an answer to the question: What do the different “perspectives” of reason (the two material perspectives and the one formal perspective) share *in common*? What is it that makes them different capacities of *one reason*, different exercises of *rationality*?

This question about the unity of reason comes into focus as a pressing question only when one recognizes the categorical differences between

<sup>8</sup> The former as the realm of the law of nature (of mechanical, conditioned causality), and the latter as the realm of freedom (of autonomous, unconditioned causality).

the three paradigmatic exercises of reason. Before exploring their unity, then, the next two sections will introduce and explain the variety within this unity.

## 2. Kant's (Formal) Anti-Reductionism

No matter how little Kant discusses the division of the mind to three main faculties in the major published works, this much is clear: For him, “the faculty of cognition, the faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire” (Letter to Karl Leonhard Reinhold, C, 10:514, [1787]) are the three “fundamental faculties of the mind” (20:246).<sup>9</sup> Since 1787, he has argued that these three same faculties are based on the *a priori* principles of the intellectual aspects of each, namely, of the understanding, reason, and the power of judgment, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

In the passage from the Introductions to the third *Critique* that I introduced at the outset, Kant argues against what I am going to call faculty and judgment “reductionism.” There and elsewhere, he criticizes the tendency to reduce practical and aesthetic judgments to theoretical judgment, and, correspondingly, to reduce reason (understood as the will – a practical cognitive faculty – not as the capacity of rationality as such) and the power of judgment to the understanding. This is one of the central tenets of Kant’s *critical* revolution, his “farewell to rationalist perfectionism.”<sup>11</sup> Against his rationalist predecessors, Kant argues that the faculties and their signature judgments are categorically, formally, different. They are not different only in terms of their contents and degree of clarity and distinctness, as his predecessors argue, but also in kind, in terms of their *form*.<sup>12</sup>

To understand in what sense these three kinds of judgments differ in *form*, recall Kant’s distinction between “general logic” and “transcendental

<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that Kant’s division is always clear-cut. For the most part in the third *Critique* and in the lectures on *Anthropology*, Kant regards the understanding as grounding the faculty of cognition, reason as grounding the faculty of desire, and the power of judgment as grounding the faculty of pleasure and displeasure. Still, in the first *Critique*, he regards the understanding as the “faculty for judging” (KPV, A69/B94), and he sometimes regards reason, rather than the understanding, as the “entire higher faculty of cognition” (A835/B863). He seems to explain and justify this apparent inconsistency in *KU*, 5:167–8. See also, Konstantin Pollok 2017, 59, and Stephen Engstrom, “The Identity of Reason” (ms).

<sup>10</sup> As his writings and students’ notes suggest, Kant seems to have been committed to this tripartite distinction from at least 1763/4 and way into the late 1790’s.

<sup>11</sup> This is Pollok’s phrase. See *Kant’s Theory of Normativity*, ch. 1.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the details of the rationalists’ view and Kant’s response, see my *Matter of Form* (ms.). Cf. Pollok, *Kant’s Theory of Normativity*, ch. 1, and Würerth, *Kant on Mind, Action and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 201.

logic.” From the perspective of general logic, logical form stands for the inferential relations *among* judgments: relations of implication, consistency, inconsistency, and so on (KRV, A56/B80).

All judgments share *this* kind of merely general or inferential form insofar as they can enter into relations of logical implication, consistency, and so on with one another. For example, as long as the judgment, “Picasso’s *Guernica* is beautiful” is inconsistent with the judgment “none of Picasso’s paintings is beautiful,” aesthetic judgment shares a “general form” with theoretical and practical judgments. But it does not share with them a “transcendental form.”

From a transcendental point of view, the form of a judgment refers to the specific ways in which any exercise of this kind of judgment *must* relate to its object if it is to be about objects at all.<sup>13</sup> And this specific mode of relating to objects manifests itself in (a) the specific *unity* of those judgments,<sup>14</sup> (b) their characteristic *activity*,<sup>15</sup> and (c) their *normative standards* (in Kant’s terms, their *a priori* grounds).<sup>16</sup> Transcendentally, then, a form of a judgment is the condition that enables this judgment to “apply” to objects *a priori*.<sup>17</sup> And this enabling condition lies in the specific unity, activity, and normativity of this specific kind of judgment. Accordingly, theoretical, practical, and aesthetic judgments will be shown to be formally different insofar as they (1) exhibit categorically different unities, (2) are made in and through categorically different acts,<sup>18</sup> and (3) are grounded in different *a priori* principles.<sup>19</sup> The next section shows them to be different precisely in these ways.

<sup>13</sup> While “General logic abstracts . . . from any relation of it to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another,” Kant claims, transcendental logic “contain [s] merely the rules of pure thinking of an object . . . It would therefore concern the origin of our cognitions of objects insofar as that cannot be ascribed to the objects” (A55/56-B80).

<sup>14</sup> On “form” as a principle of unity or organization, consider, for example, the forms of sensibility that are responsible for the ways in which what is given to the senses is spatially and temporally ordered (e.g., KRV, A20/B34), and the form of the understanding that is responsible for the unity of any given manifold (e.g., B164).

<sup>15</sup> See especially Kant’s understanding of form as “determination [*Bestimmung*]” of matter, and the latter as the “determinable in general [*das Bestimmbare überhaupt*]” (KRV, A261/B317), thus, as a kind of act or activity.

<sup>16</sup> For Kant thinks of form as the condition of the possibility of that which it is a form, e.g., A267/B324.

<sup>17</sup> A56/B80–1.

<sup>18</sup> In A79/B105, Kant suggests that the unity of judgments can be understood in terms of their (1) acts, and (2) in terms of their contents. He distinguishes the latter according to their (a) predicative unity and (b) the unity of their single representation; (b) will be discussed only in brief in Section 4.

<sup>19</sup> For reasons of space, I will not discuss the differences regarding the *a priori* principles in this chapter.

### 3. Formal Variety

#### 3.1. *Constitutive Act*

The act constitutive of aesthetic judgment differs from the acts constitutive of the other two kinds of judgment insofar as it is an act made in and through a feeling of pleasure or displeasure: “Taste is the faculty for judging an object . . . through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction” (5:211). To make an aesthetic judgment is to *feel* a specific kind of pleasure, not simply to report that one has felt pleasure or that one ought to feel pleasure. The judgment includes a demand or a (subjective) “ought” (e.g., 5:216, 5:237), which is made in and through the feeling that one is conscious of as required from everyone (e.g., 5:194). One judges aesthetically when one actually feels a disinterested pleasure in an object, the same pleasure that one finds to be called for by everyone from the same object. In short, aesthetic judgment is *affective*.

Theoretical judgment on the downstream – ordinary, empirical – level categorically differs from (ordinary) aesthetic judgment in that it is made in and through an act of believing.<sup>20</sup> To make a theoretical judgment on this

<sup>20</sup> I use the phrase “downstream level” to mark a distinction that Kant makes within the notion of theoretical judgment; a distinction that I take to apply to aesthetic judgments too. In the *Transcendental Analytic* of *KRV*, Kant characterizes how theoretical judgment operates upstream from ordinary, empirical, factual judgments, namely, from the kind of judgment that I describe in the body of the text (which is the same kind of theoretical judgment that philosophers today tend to be interested in). Understood on this upstream level, theoretical judgment is not an act of ascribing a property to an object (by predicating a property of the logical subject of the judgment). It is not an act determining the relation between a representation and an object, an act that can thus be true or false in light of whether it represents the relation correctly or not (*KRV*, A75/B82). Rather, from the transcendental perspective, theoretical judgment is an act that determines anything that may be brought before the mind as a possible object of representations, that is, as a thing that could either bear predication or be predicated. In and through this determining act, we constitute that which “can be cognized through [a] concept (A69/B94), and thus realize our capacity to represent, cognize, or “think an object” (A80/B106). Theoretical judgment, on this fundamental level, does not concern the content of cognitions – the truths about certain objects – but the form of cognition insofar as cognition’s form is its relation to its object. It is the condition of the possibility of cognizing objects: those about which it is possible to make true or false propositions (e.g., *KRV*, A57/B82–A60/B85). As such, theoretical judgment is an act of determining an intuition as an object of cognition *rather* than an act that constitutes an intuition as an object of feeling (*KU*, 5:206). While theoretical judgment (so understood) is the condition of the possibility of representing anything in the predicative sphere (and as such, as an object rather than a subject), the judgment of taste (understood transcendently) is the condition of the possibility of experiencing anything in the affective sphere, and of communicating anything at all. Theoretical judgment is a determining, “objective” – literally opposing – act, while the judgment of taste is a non-determining, or more accurately, a non-objectively determining (not “opposing”) affective act. If the latter is determining, it is *subjectively* determining. The judgment of taste is an act that determines *the subject*, *not the object* (20:223), as that which can feel objects.

level – as distinguished from the transcendental level – *is* to believe that an object has a certain property, not only to report that one so believes or that one ought to so believe. To so judge is to commit oneself to the truth of the proposition so expressed; it is “taking something to be true” or “assenting” [*Das Fürwahrhalten*] (A820/B848). The judgment includes a demand or an “ought” that is made in and through a belief, which one is conscious of as required from everyone. One judges theoretically when one actually believes that the object has a certain property, the belief that one is also aware of as required by everyone (A820/B848–A/823/B851). In short, theoretical judgment (in its ordinary, empirical incarnation) is *doxastic*.

Finally, the act constitutive of practical judgment is made in and through an intention. To make a practical judgment *is* to intend to act in a certain way – and to so act when all goes well – not only to report an intention. Nor does it report a *belief* about a property of the object: *Practically* judging an action to be good, which is to judge it to be required, may be said to ascribe a certain property to the action at stake only in the sense that it is an act of committing oneself to so acting – in similar conditions – namely, of intending to bring about this action.<sup>21</sup> (This is still a *cognitive* judgment – a form of knowing the action to be required (KRV, A823/B851, KPV, 5:58) – but a *practical* rather than a theoretical form of knowledge.) In this sense, practical judgment is not only *practical* but also *efficacious* – a judgment that *brings about* its object since, when all goes well, practical judgment materializes in an action. This is why practical judgment *determines the will*. It represents its “object as an effect possible through freedom,” as an object that “would be made real” (KPV, 5:57). Thus, while it applies a universal to a particular (KPV, 5:67), like all cognitive judgments, practical judgment also “brings with it necessity with respect to the existence of an action and is thus a practical law . . . a law of freedom in accordance with which the will is to be determinable” (KPV, 5:67–8). The particular action that is judged to fall under the “practical rule of reason” (ibid.) is the same one that, in so judging, the judgment determines the will to bring about. The object of practical judgment is a “way of acting” and “not a thing” (KPV, 5:60). And its concepts are *practical* rather than theoretical cognitions: They do not determine the properties of objects given through intuitions, but “themselves produce the

<sup>21</sup> Kant does speak of “moral beliefs,” but suggests that, in contrast to theoretical beliefs, they are not stances toward propositions but attitudes of agents (of being interested in certain things, or letting them matter, rather than speculating about them): “I must not even say ‘It is morally certain that there is a God,’ etc., but rather ‘I am morally certain,’ etc.” (A282/B856).



reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will), which is not the business of theoretical concepts" (*KPV*, 5:66).

Like the two other kinds of judgment, practical judgment also includes a demand or an "ought," but the act constitutive of this practical demand is made in and through the intention to act. And one is conscious of this intention as demanded from everyone. One judges practically, then, when one intends to act, knowing that this intention is required from everyone in the same conditions.

### 3.2. *Interlude*

Notice that the "ought" or universal demand is different in form in these three cases (and not only in virtue of the different acts that constitute it). In all these cases, the universal demand, as a demand that everyone judges similarly, is a subjective demand: a demand on every subject. In the theoretical and practical cases, this subjective universality or demand is grounded in objective universality: It is because, say, every body is extended and because every action with the same features is good (conditionally or unconditionally), that everyone ought to judge this body to be extended and, if found in similar circumstances, to pursue this action. But as Stephen Engstrom emphasizes, there is one important difference here: It is only in the practical case that subjective universality and objective universality coincide.<sup>22</sup> The object of practical judgment is the subject: a free will.

What about aesthetic judgment? Kant famously claims that this judgment is only subjectively (or intersubjectively) universal, but not objectively universal. Why is aesthetic judgment subjectively universal but not objectively universal? I propose that Kant claims so primarily because he wishes to stress two points: the *singularity* of beautiful objects and the *affective* nature of proper responsiveness to them. When I judge this sunset or this poem to be beautiful and demand that everyone agree with me and feel a similar pleasure, my demand is grounded in the singular beauty of *this* sunset and *this* poem, not in a property shared by all sunsets and all poems (not even by all sunsets in the same conditions and all poems with comparable features). Moreover, on my reading, when Kant claims that beauty is not a "property" of objects, he does *not deny* that beauty is a

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

characteristic *of* beautiful objects, but rather means above all to stress that, while it metaphysically resides in beautiful objects, whether they are experienced or not, *axiologically*, beauty is a kind of feature that makes a claim on everyone's *feeling* (5:281–2). Beauty is not an objective property to the extent that the *proper response to it is affective*. In this sense, beauty is not independent of the judging subject's "subjectivity": Just as facts call for beliefs and goods call for actions, *beauties call for feelings*. To that extent, beauty is essentially subjective, and aesthetic judgment's universal demand – a demand grounded in one's own subjectivity, that is, one's actual feeling of pleasure – puts pressure on everyone's subjectivity.

### 3.3. *Predicative Unity*

Unsurprisingly, the (so-called) predicative unity in aesthetic judgment is a unity of the logical subject of a judgment not with a (standard) predicate but with the mental representation that Kant calls a feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) (*KU*, 5:288–9). This is no mere combination of two representations, but rather (as in the case of the predicative unities of the other two kinds of judgment) a unity grounded in a transcendental principle. (This is, Kant argues, the principle of the – subjective – unity of "judgment in general.")<sup>23</sup> Correspondingly, what is claimed in the judgment is not that a particular feeling of a particular subject is thereby combined with a certain intuition of an object, but that this object merits the very sort of feeling that this particular judgment exemplifies (e.g., 5:289). To judge aesthetically is "the same as merely to repeat [the object's] own claim to everyone's satisfaction" (5:281–2); it is, again, to feel pleasure that one is aware of as required for the object, even though this "requiredness" is not captured by any general principle or concept. This is one reason why Kant claims that the judgment of taste, though grounded in no laws, is nonetheless *lawful*. Its predication is a lawful connection of those that *must* be united together. Thus, when we judge aesthetically, we do not report a merely psychological combination of representations, but make a claim that the relevant object should be judged through the same feeling. But however lawful, aesthetic predication is also *immediate*, constituted in and through a feeling of pleasure, and mediated by no objective law (5:289). Still, it is nonetheless an affective predication, rather than mere association, because aesthetic pleasure is a mode of self-consciousness – it is aware of

<sup>23</sup> 5:287.

itself as fitting to its ground, a ground that is the relation between the object and the free harmony of the faculties (e.g., 5:222).<sup>24</sup>

Kant famously stresses that the predicative unity of theoretical judgment should not be understood as the “representation of a logical relation between two concepts” (B140). Rather, theoretical judgment fundamentally is “the way to bring given cognitions to the **objective** unity of apperception” (B142). This is a notoriously obscure claim, which could here only be explained as follows: Kant regards the unity of apperception as *the* fundamental form of theoretical judgment. It determines intuitions as belonging together in one consciousness *necessarily* insofar as they are those that must be cognized together if they are to be cognized at all. The objective unity of apperception is not a psychological act of associating representations according to some habit of the mind, however tempting this interpretation of “unity” or “synthesis” is. Rather, it is the condition of the possibility of cognizing intuitions as possible objects. Without it, nothing can be present to the mind as a possible bearer of properties or modifications of such bearers. Not only is this unity lawful, but it is the source of all theoretical laws – the condition of the possibility of any concept and of any judgment:

Only in this way does there arise from this relation **a judgment**, i.e., a relation that is **objectively valid**, the ground of a claim such as “It, the body, **is** heavy,” which would be to say that these two representations are combined in the object, i.e., regardless of any difference in the conditions of the subject. (B142)

What is here determined is not the relation between an intuition and (everyone’s) feeling, or a desire as an object of the will, but the intuition itself as that which can present objects to the mind. This is a transcendental principle for lawfully determining *an object*.

In a practical judgment, predication is efficacious insofar as it is the predication of the concepts of “good” and “evil” that Kant understands not as “thing[s]” but as “way[s] of acting” (KPV, 5:60). To say of an action that it is good is to commit oneself to bring it about in an action. “Good” and “evil” are not represented as objects that are independent of me, but as those that are to be brought about by my agency.

Kant emphasizes that the unity of consciousness required for such efficacious predication is distinctively practical: While practical judgment presupposes the categories and must conform to them, it does not do so

<sup>24</sup> On this as a mark of rationality, see my “Pleasure as an Exercise of Rational Agency? A Kantian Proposal” in *Pleasure: a History*, ed. Lisa Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

“with a view to a theoretical use of the understanding, in order to bring *a priori* the manifold of (sensible) *intuition* under one consciousness, but only in order to subject *a priori* the manifold of *desires* to the *unity of consciousness of a practical reason*” (KPV, 5:65; the final italic is my own). Because practical judgment does not determine intuitions so as to have objective purport but rather determines desires as objects *of the will* (free actions), its unity is the unity of the consciousness of *practical* reason: a unity of lawfulness or universality as such. Here too the relevant unity is not a matter of psychologically associating different representations, but of necessarily uniting an act, its goal, and its reasons, according to a law.<sup>25</sup>

The three varieties of judgments at stake are thus categorically different in terms of their respective constitutive acts and predicative unities: different in form. Yet, Kant also stresses their crucial unity. Early on he writes, “the very close relationship of the materials under examination [of knowledge and action] leads us at the same time, in the *Critique of Reason*, to pay some attention to the *Critique of Taste*, that is to say to *aesthetics*.”<sup>26</sup> Later on, after his discovery that the faculty of pleasure and displeasure is grounded in the *a priori* principles of the power of judgment, Kant came to recognize that, though not a capacity for rational *cognition* (KU, 5:171), like theoretical and practical cognition, taste *is* rational, a “*rationalizing taste*.”<sup>27</sup> The long-recognized affinity between these three was discovered to be an affinity of reason: of three rational capacities of the mind.

What makes these three judgments *the* three signature judgments of the “higher” faculties of the mind, the three dimensions of *reason*? While the answer to this question is complex, here I focus on only one of its aspects: lawfulness.

#### 4. Lawfulness

Though Kant notices the affinity between theoretical, practical, and aesthetic judgments earlier on, it is only his 1787 discovery of the *a priori* principles of the power of judgment that finally allows him to think of aesthetic judgment as analogous to the two other kinds of judgment at least in the following respect: *Though constituted by a feeling of pleasure*, aesthetic judgment is neither explained nor justified by any merely

<sup>25</sup> On this necessary unity, see Section 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Program of His Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765–66*, Ak. 2:311–12.

<sup>27</sup> *Anthropology from a Pragmatic View*, 7:240.

psychological conditions, but by a universal and necessary capacity of the mind. Kant claims to have both discovered and “shown” that “there are grounds for satisfaction *a priori* . . . even though they cannot be grasped by determinate concepts” (5:347), grounds that are also “independent of the determination of the faculty of desire” (20:207). The crux of the discovery is a feeling of pleasure, whose *a priori* grounding cannot be explained by the *a priori* grounds of either theoretical or practical reason. It is because judgments of taste are constituted by *this* kind of “special feeling and distinctive receptivity that requires a special section under the properties of the mind” (20:207), that they are, like the other two kinds of judgments, both universal and necessary. It is because aesthetic pleasure is special in the way I gestured toward above that it can constitute a judgment that is both necessary and universal. While made through feeling, aesthetic judgment constitutes a necessary unity between this feeling and the representation of the object and issues a claim on everyone to feel and judge similarly.<sup>28</sup> This judgment is lawful, and so are the other two varieties of judgment.

The lawfulness of these three judgments consists both in their necessary demand on others – in their normativity – and in their *necessary unity*: They demand that others unite the representations at stake in the same way (i.e., that they predicate similarly), since the unity they constitute is necessary, independently of any subjective conditions. Perhaps in contrast to judgments of agreeableness (if these even count as judgments), the signature judgments of the mind are lawful insofar as they are presented as (1) either laws that others ought to follow or as exemplars that others ought (independently of any objective duty or concept) to emulate, and as (2) the products of judging subjects *qua* legislators – *qua* rational subjects. And this is because their respective predications are *lawful* – predicated *necessarily* not in light of any psychological or merely empirical rules of association or reproduction, but by the acts of self-consciousness briefly mentioned previously. Consider the following.

In his theory of knowledge, Kant explains the urgency of lawfulness by demonstrating that it would not be possible for us to experience anything either as an object or as an event unless we experience what is given to the senses as lawfully unified independently of any subjective conditions; unified in the object. Here he explains lawfulness as a *transcendental condition* on the mind, without which nothing could even be experienced.

<sup>28</sup> While I have attempted to show that this pleasure is not merely psychologically associated with the representation of an object, but unified with it necessarily as required from everyone, and briefly suggested that this is partly because this pleasure is conscious of its rational ground (the relation between the free play of the faculties and the representation of the object), I neither attempted to explain why Kant thinks that it is so nor to justify this picture of the pleasure in the beautiful.

If, for example, I purported to experience the freezing of water not as lawfully unified, that is, not as unified according to a necessary order that *differs* from the private order of my perceptual history and associations, I would not even be able to experience it as the freezing of water. In order to experience it as the event that it is, I must be constrained to experience the representation of fluidity as *necessarily* preceding the representation of solidity; otherwise, I might experience it as a coexisting object (say, as an ice cube). I (like anyone else) can experience the freezing of the water as consisting in this order of representations, that is, as the event that it is, only if what is given to the senses is experienced as *lawful*, particularly, as constrained by the understanding's category of causality – by a law of the understanding. Only as such – as constrained by a law of the understanding – can I present any judgment about this event as a necessary judgment, a judgment that everyone must make in the same circumstances.

Kant's discussion of the lawfulness of practical reason has a different emphasis, but here too, it is clear that lawfulness is not optional, but rather a transcendental condition. To be permissible, our actions must be lawful in two respects. In the moral sphere, those actions that are determined by the moral law are lawful insofar as they are necessary: "duty is the necessity of an action from respect for law" (*G* 4:400). They are *necessary* in the sense that they and other instantiations of them (in these specific kinds of circumstances, for these kinds of agents) are required independently of any subjective needs, inclinations, and ends. It is the unconditional necessity of these actions that exhibits them as *lawful actions*. Such moral actions are lawful insofar as they are actions done according to *laws*, not according to "counsels" or mere "principles," which involve a merely contingent necessity (*G*, 4:416; 4:420).

Moral actions are not only necessarily required; they must also exhibit a necessary unity. Moral actions must have the form of the law insofar as their acts, ends, and motives must be unified in a universalizable way. This universalizability consists in "the necessity that the maxim be in conformity with this law [which means in conformity with] the universality of the law as such" (4:420–1). Kant emphasizes that "this conformity alone is what the imperative properly represents as necessary" (4:421). An action is permissible only if it is possible for everyone to act in the same way for the same kind of end and for the same reason in the same kind of circumstance. While the understanding requires that human representations and experiences be lawfully unified in order to be anything at all to the mind, practical reason requires that human actions be lawfully unified in order to be permissible. The form of a permissible action (which is, roughly, the

unity between the act, end, and reason for acting comprised under the maxim of such an action) is the form of a law: the form of universalizability as such.<sup>29</sup>

I propose two ways of thinking about aesthetic lawfulness. First, the judgment of beauty involves a kind of necessitation in virtue of the distinctive nature of beauty: “[Beauty] has a necessary relation to satisfaction.”<sup>30</sup> Beauty *calls for* pleasure: It merits one’s feeling of pleasure in making a “claim to everyone’s satisfaction.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Kant suggests that beautiful objects, in contrast to other human beings, do not make objective claims on us. Yet, in making an aesthetic judgment we take ourselves to be responsive to them as we ought to be – to repeat a claim that is independent of our private conditions.<sup>32</sup> The predicative unity of these judgments is thus also necessary. Though it is not grounded in any law – neither in rules of art nor in empirical generalizations or practical principles that indicate that this object must be pleasing – we present the unity between the representation of the object and our feeling as necessary, independently of any subjective conditions (e.g., 5:236–7). And so in making these judgments, we present ourselves as sources of laws: as those whose judgments constitute a necessary predicative unity and a universal demand. We present our aesthetic judgments as exemplars to be emulated.<sup>33</sup>

Kant stresses here, too, that this lawfulness is not optional, but a transcendental condition on aesthetic judgment. To fail to present one’s pleasure as lawfully united with the representation of the object independently of any subjective conditions results in a judgment of the agreeable (e.g., 5:212–13), not in a judgment of taste. One cannot make a judgment of taste independently of this lawfulness.

Second, beautiful objects present themselves and are exhibited by the imagination as lawfully unified in that they look as if each of the parts that composes their beauty ought to be just the way it is – they present themselves as necessary unities. Imagine that we replace even just one particular shade of color in a beautiful painting. If we do that, the beauty

<sup>29</sup> G, 4:416, 4:461. <sup>30</sup> 5:236. <sup>31</sup> 5:281–2.

<sup>32</sup> Again, this is partly in virtue of the nature of aesthetic pleasure as a mode of affective self-consciousness. Aesthetic pleasure involves an awareness of itself as fitting its ground.

<sup>33</sup> Again, this unity is called for by the *beauty of the object*, beauty that merits pleasure. But no concept, principle, or proof – no law – can prove that pleasure is necessary for the object at stake. Only our judgment itself can be presented as a lawful exemplar to be emulated.

of the whole painting might be lost.<sup>34</sup> When we judge, say, Jean-Etienne Liotard's painting, *The Chocolate Girl*, to be beautiful, we regard the particular shade of pink of the chocolate girl's cap as "necessary" for the beauty of the painting, for if it were changed, the painting as a whole would be different and perhaps no longer beautiful.<sup>35</sup> But a slightly different shade might fit perfectly in composing the beauty of another painting. This aesthetic necessity is not "general," like the necessity of an ordinary, empirical (non-aesthetically considered) object and of a required action; it is not a necessary characteristic of *all* beautiful objects, not even of all beautiful paintings, or, say, of all of Liotard's beautiful paintings. Rather, as singularly characterizing a particular object (indeed, an *individual*), it is a "singular" necessity "without a law."

Thus, although the unity that the imagination exhibits in aesthetic judgment is neither based on general rules and concepts nor does it generate one, it is nonetheless a "necessary" unity, characterized by a non-rule-governed sort of singular necessary unity and a distinctive kind of normativity. Even though, when engaged with a beautiful object, the imagination is guided by no given law of the understanding – by no principle of unification and determination – it nonetheless succeeds in presenting what is given to it both as necessarily unified and as that of which pleasure should be predicated. I take it that this is, in extreme brevity, what Kant means by the imagination's "free lawfulness" or "lawfulness without a law" (5:240).

## 5. Lawfulness and Imagination

Much ink has spilled over Kant's pithy characterization of the imagination as "a blind though indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition at all" (A78/B103). In this section, I claim that the imagination is crucial not only for theoretical cognition but more broadly for *human rationality*. It plays a central role in our overall rational life as knowers, actors, and appreciators, who must experience and act in their world lawfully. What is the nature of the imagination such that it plays this key role in our lives?

Very briefly, Kant indicates that without invention (5:244) or imposition, the imagination is capable of apprehending and exhibiting things

<sup>34</sup> For the differences between this holistic unity and other kinds of holistic unity (e.g., of organisms), see my "Tale of Two Faculties," in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 51.4 (2011): 415–36.

<sup>35</sup> The painting is part of the permanent collection in Dresden's *Old Masters Picture Gallery*.



as other than they would have otherwise appeared. It presents, Kant famously claims, even what is absent from an intuition: “[the imagination is] the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition” (B151).<sup>36</sup> Initially, this characterization may seem to best fit the reproductive imagination insofar as this empirical and partially psychological function of the imagination (the reproductive one) presents, minimally, what has already been sensed but is no longer sensed, in present intuitions. But Kant ascribes this presentation power to the imagination in the section of the Transcendental Deduction of *KRV* titled “On the application of the categories to objects of the senses in general,” a section where he introduces the non-empirical and non-reproductive “transcendental synthesis of the imagination,” under the heading of the “productive imagination” (B152). Thus, the capacity to present what is absent from a given intuition must characterize both the reproductive and the productive exercises of the imagination. Presumably, as I will explain shortly, the latter is capable of presenting a sensible intuition as exhibiting a lawful, *conceptual* unity: It is capable of presenting what is absent from a sensible intuition when this intuition is thought of *independently* of the understanding.

Reflection on metaphor can shed light on this trait of the imagination and on its capacity to present things as they would have not otherwise appeared. For metaphors also present both (1) that which is absent from an intuition and (2) objects as they would have not otherwise appeared. For example, a famous metaphor presents Julia as the sun, even though the sun is absent from the intuition of Julia, and even though Julia might not have appeared as the sun independently of the metaphor. If indeed metaphoric in the way that Arthur Danto claims it is, then Thomas Gainsborough’s painting, *St. James’s Mall*, presents the transient nature of time and beauty, even though transience is not (literally at least) present in the painting.<sup>37</sup>

Like metaphors, the imagination allows us to see things in a different light – to see what is in front of us all the time, but see it anew, see it as never before. The power of the imagination is not just a power of invention but of seeing, or more accurately, of “recognizing” – a term that retains the term “cognizance,” suggesting not mere sensory seeing, but *seeing with sense or understanding*. The imagination recognizes or construes

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 701–2.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Common Place: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 216. The painting is part of the permanent collection in the *Frick Collection*.

what it intuits in different terms.<sup>38</sup> It is this metaphorical, construing power of the imagination that plays a crucial role in our being lawful in the human world, as we *have to be*.

This is particularly clear in the case of the theoretical variety of lawfulness. Again, in the *KRV*, Kant takes himself to have established that experience is possible only if what is received by the senses is *lawfully* unified and constrained by the pure concepts of the understanding;<sup>39</sup> by an act of “synthesis according to a law.”<sup>40</sup>

However, if sensible representations can be experienced only as unified and constrained by the forms of the understanding, they must be recognized and “exhibited”<sup>41</sup> in terms of the understanding.<sup>42</sup> According to Kant, only the transcendental imagination suits to serve this task.<sup>43</sup> Thanks to the dual, sensible and intellectual, character that Kant attributes to it, the transcendental imagination allows the mind to exhibit the sensible manifold in terms of the requirements of the understanding: in this particular case, in terms of its requirement for lawfulness. For example, the imagination is responsible for our capacity to experience the sensible representations that constitute the freezing of the water in the lawful order mentioned previously, and thus as lawful in light of the category of causality.

If not for the imagination’s capacity to present what is absent from a given intuition, we would not have been able to *experience* any aspect of the world.

In the aesthetic case, we need the imagination, *not* “as subjected to laws of association” but as “productive and self-active” (5:240). We need it as a free capacity to recognize and present beautiful objects as those which “can provide it with a form that contains precisely such a composition of the manifold as the imagination would design in harmony with the lawfulness of the understanding” (5:240–1), *independently* of both the laws of the understanding and the subjective rules of association. We need the “free lawfulness of the imagination” (5:240) to apprehend beauty in the way it must be apprehended: as lawful in both senses explained before.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. J. Michael Young, “Kant’s View of the Imagination,” *Kant-Studien* vol. 79, no 1–4 (1988): 140–64.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., *KRV*, A 97, B133–6. <sup>40</sup> E.g., *KRV*, A 97, B-140–68, *KU*, 5:242.

<sup>41</sup> *Darstellen*, A137/B176. For accounts of the schemata as forms of translations or specifications of the categories, see J. Michael Young, “Kant’s View of the Imagination”; Rudolf Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 26–44; and Henry Allison, *Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2nd ed., 2004), 202–18.

<sup>42</sup> I leave aside the requirement that the categories be exhibited in sensible terms.

<sup>43</sup> B15, A137/B176–A147/B187.

The imagination's role in sensibly exhibiting the practical variety of lawfulness is significantly more intricate since Kant famously claims, in the "Typic of Pure Practical Reason," that the moral law admits of no imaginative schema. Claiming that "the moral law has no cognitive faculty other than the understanding (*not the imagination*)" by means of which it can be applied to objects of nature (KPV, 5:70; my italics), Kant seems to suggest that the practical variety of lawfulness cannot be imaginatively exhibited. While I cannot in this chapter prove the imagination's key role with regard to the practical form of lawfulness, suffice it to say that I take Kant's account of the role of the imagination vis-à-vis practical reason in the third *Critique* to be, not an emendation of the claims in the *Typic*, but nonetheless their expansion. Though Kant has not changed his mind about the imagination's inability to provide a sensible schema of the moral law (5:341), he did come to appreciate, as his discussion of fine art, genius, and aesthetic ideas indicate, that the imagination can render rational ideas, including moral ideas, in sensible terms (5:314–15). He also came to hold that the imagination is a key for our capacity to symbolize the practical good: to present it indirectly, by means of an analogy (5:352–3). This presentation is required if the good is to be an object of practical judgment – if the subject could determine itself to bring about a required lawful action in the sensible world. Here, then, Kant suggests that the imagination *does* have a role to play in rendering practical lawfulness in sensible terms. A central feature of the imagination's relevant symbolization – namely, of the analogy it draws between the beautiful and the morally good, an analogy, on which, Kant claims, moral judgment *depends* – is the free lawfulness of the imagination (5:354). It is in part the imagination's ability to accord, even in its freedom from laws, with reason's requirement of lawfulness, that allows it to present practical judgment as analogous to the judgment of taste in a way that renders the former sensibly applicable – a judgment that can determine the will to act in the sensible world. It is highly plausible, then, that the imagination is crucial not only for the theoretical and aesthetic varieties of lawfulness, but also for the sensible symbolization of practical lawfulness.

## 6. Conclusion

It is the imagination, then, the imagination alone, that can allow us to cognize, act in, and appreciate the empirical world in accord with the transcendental requirement of lawfulness.

It is only the imagination that can exhibit the world as lawful, even when it does not follow any specific law; even when no determining law could be applied, as in the case of beauty. Only the imagination can exhibit the sensibly given as embodying necessity and necessary unities, and allow us to judge things as those that we ought to so judge: as, say, the freezing of the water and not an ice cube, as a beautiful rose rather than an ugly one, as an action to perform rather than one to refrain from performing. The understanding, reason, and the power of judgment could not function lawfully in their worldly pursuits independently of their interaction with the imagination.

No doubt, the imagination itself is the author of no laws, not even of subjective laws, such as the laws of the power of judgment. The imagination might be a source of subjective rules of association and reproduction, but these are not subjective *laws* since they involve no normativity either for the particular associating subject or for anyone beyond her. It is partly for that reason that the imagination is not one of the three “high” faculties of the mind: not fully belonging to our intellectual, *a priori* capacities. But nor does it *fully* belong to sensibility. As Kant likes to put it, the imagination belongs to both sensibility and the intellect (or perhaps to neither).<sup>44</sup> Though issuing no laws, the imagination is still (freely) lawful. It is in this capacity that it transcends the sensible in and through being sensible. As a capacity for *presentation*, the imagination is sensible: It *presents* the *sensible* world as lawful. But it is exactly in so presenting what is given to the senses that the imagination goes beyond the senses; that it is, like the understanding, reason, and the power of judgment, lawful. Thus, it is the imagination – this “indispensable function of the soul” – that is a key for our capacity to be rational beings *in and of the* empirical world, of *our* world. The imagination is central to our being rational animals.

<sup>44</sup> As I’d like to put it, Kant’s view of the imagination is a key for perspicuously grasping how radically he transcends both rationalism and empiricism – how, while insisting on the categorical difference between the sensible and the intellectual, he also forgoes any thought about their actual separation and denies any gap between them.



## *Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early Wissenschaftslehre*

*Johannes Haag*

In his *Grundriß des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* (*GR*) (1795), Fichte thematizes a problem for any would-be transcendental philosophy, which was first raised by Salomon Maimon. Namely, how can any philosophy validate a reference to objects that are taken to exist independently of subjective experience (as causally interacting with the subject) while, at the same time, maintaining that there is ultimately nothing but the activity of an experiencing subject as a ground for the objective reference? Fichte provides an answer to this question that, at first glance, makes matters worse in its wholehearted embrace of the activity of (productive) imagination as the ground for both the categories and the objects of experience to which they are applied. He consequently puts Maimon's criticism as follows:

Maimon would say, "I am prepared to concede that there are a priori laws of thinking . . . but . . . only the imagination can apply them to objects. Hence, in applying these laws to objects, the object and the law must be present in the imagination at the same time. How then does the imagination have access to the object?"<sup>1</sup>

One might grant that the question of *applicability* of the categories to the objects of experience may be trivially solved by this move; however, it seems to jeopardize claims to the *objectivity* of our representations of objects – and thus hazardous to the claims of a transcendental philosophy,

<sup>1</sup> (*GR*, GA I,3:190; W 1:387/8). Fichte's works are quoted after the critical edition Fichte, J. G., *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, (eds. Gliwitzky, Hans, Jacob, Hans & Lauth, Reinhard), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog 1961 ff. (GA). In addition, quotes are given with reference to the edition by Immanuel Hermann Fichte of *Fichtes Werke* (W). Unless indicated otherwise, I use the translation by Peter Heath & John Lachs for the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and Daniel Breazeale's translation in *Fichte – Early Philosophical Writings*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), for the *Grundriß des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre*. Quotes are from the *GL* unless otherwise indicated.

which, in the words of Wilfrid Sellars, must aim to delineate “the general features any conceptual system must have in order to generate knowledge of a world to which it belongs” (Sellars 1967, 646). Is not Fichte’s answer tantamount to giving up on this central task of transcendental philosophy?

In this chapter, I would like to show that Fichte’s conception of the productive imagination yields interesting and challenging answers to the problem of the objectivity of our representations of objects of experience from an idealist perspective. Moreover, Fichte is right to claim that his own answer was not at all alien to the “spirit” of Kant’s critical philosophy. I will try to show this in particular by presenting a reading of the intricate and important “Deduction of Representation (Deduction der Vorstellung)” of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre (GL)* (1794).

### 1. Applicability versus Objectivity

Let us begin by framing the two problems of applicability and objectivity in general terms. The question of *applicability* is the following: How can a mental representation<sup>2</sup> that, after all, is essentially a state of a representing subject be about anything that is essentially not (a state of) this subject? Put like this, the problem seems to be restricted to a representation of something that is not in turn essentially subjective itself. There seems to be no corresponding question of applicability with respect to representations of representational states of the subjects themselves.

Consequently, a very simple – though at first glance quite radical – answer would claim that, since the problem of applicability does not seem to occur with respect to representations, we should restrict the scope of the applicability of representations to things that themselves ultimately are nothing but representational states of the subject. Ontologically speaking, there would seem to be faint echoes of Berkeley here: Represented objects would be only representations (ideas), after all. Epistemologically speaking, the resulting view would, however, be nothing like Berkeley’s. It would still be robustly representational, the distinction between representation and represented object firmly in place, if only from the view of the subject of experience. Hence, although ontologically speaking there would be only representations *qua* states of the subject of experience, there still would be a distinction between a represented object of experience and the states of its subject built into the conception.

<sup>2</sup> I henceforth drop the qualification “mental.”

Insofar as the object of experience is an object only from the perspective of the representing subject, this radical solution seems to run afoul of a whole other set of problems, all related to the question of *objectivity*. It seems as if the subject of these seeming representations would be permanently mistaken – and not only about the true nature of the objects thus represented. The subject would even be mistaken about there being anything like an object present in experience, given that being an object essentially implies not being merely experienced. How can we take our representations to be about an object existing independently from being thus represented if the object itself is nothing but a sum of representations? How can there be objectivity, i.e., correct or incorrect representational taking-as, if every taking is, in a sense to be elucidated, a *mistaking* after all (as Wilfrid Sellars so aptly put it)?<sup>3</sup> How, in other words, is what seems like a radical subjectivism to be reconciled with the possibility of objective intentional reference to objects of experience?

Sellars himself, in a late paper on “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism” (1976), hints at a reading of Kant that can point to the general structure that an answer to these questions must have. At the very end of this paper he writes by way of conclusion:

Kant saw that the concept of an object of perception contains a reference to the perceptual takings which are the criteria for its actuality. He also saw that the concept of a perceptual taking as the taking of an object contains a reference to material things and events which, if actual, would imply its own actuality. The actuality of perceptual takings and the actuality of material things and processes are not logically independent. (Sellars 1976 section 53)

In this remark, Sellars claims a mutual dependence of the concept of an object of perception or experience and the (possible) experiences or perceptual takings of this same object. He investigates both directions of the dependence by means of an exegesis of Kant’s concept of an object of experience or, more broadly, an empirical reality that exists as *actual*, but not *in-itself* (in the Kantian sense of existence *in-itself*). This distinction grounds the viability of a phenomenalism concerning experienced reality that is compatible with its claim to objectivity.

What is the concept of *actuality* at work here? The concept of an actually existing object is the concept of an object of perception or experience that stays the same through actual or possible changes of perspective

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sellars 1982, 109.



that result in a sequence of representations of the subject of experience. Taking up an example that Kant uses at the beginning of the 2nd *Analogy* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*KRV*), the content of the perceptual takings of any given house would be of the general form “house-from-such-and-such-a-point-of-view” (Sellars 1976 section 48), for instance, “that house facing me edgewise.” The concept of an object of experience would then be the concept of what gives unity to a given string of successive perceptual takings of an object. Not, however, as something existing *per se*, but as that part of the content which the successive representations share, i.e., the content house that is common to each of the successive perceptual takings.

The objective content, of course, is not the only content these representations share, as Sellars is quick to point out. The perceiving subject is the other constant common factor in this varying flow of perceptual takings of an object. And it is in this sense that he can claim that “the core of the knowable self is the self as perceiver of material things and events” (Sellars 1976 section 52). Thus conceived, the concept of a perceiving, experiencing, and knowing self already incorporates a reference to the actual existence of the objects thus perceived, experienced, and known – and vice versa. In short, they are mutually dependent.

It is not difficult to rediscover the essential features of Sellars’ point in the passage from the *Second Analogy* he takes as his clue. Here is Kant’s exposition of our problem:

But once I raise my concepts of an object to the level of transcendental signification (*Bedeutung*), the house is not at all a thing-in-itself but is only an appearance, i.e., a representation (*Vorstellung*), whose transcendental object is unknown. What, then, do I mean by the question as to how the manifold may be combined in appearance itself (which, after all, is nothing in itself)? (Kant, *KRV*, A190/1/B235/6)<sup>4</sup>

And Kant immediately goes on to present his own answer from the perspective of “transcendental signification”:

Here what lies in the successive apprehension is regarded as representation (*Vorstellung*); but the appearance (*Erscheinung*) that is given to me, despite being nothing more than a sum (*Inbegriff*) of these representations, is regarded as their object, with which the concept that I obtain from the representations of apprehension is to agree. (Kant, *KRV*, A191/B236)

<sup>4</sup> For the *KRV*, I use the translation of Werner S. Pluhar (Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Patricia Kitcher, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996).

Hence, what is in point of fact nothing but a sum of representations is *taken to be* by the representing subject *as an object of experience*. Maimon's skeptical point seems reinforced: We are simply mistaking representations (synthesized by the imagination in accordance with the laws of the understanding) as objects. However, Kant offers a different take, reminding us of the "nominal definition of truth" (Kant, *KRV*, A58/B82) that is presupposed and that requires a criterion that allows us to distinguish "this object . . . from others" (Kant, *KRV*, A58/B83):

We soon see that, since agreement of cognition with the object is truth, the question can only be inquiring after the formal conditions of empirical truth; and we see that appearance, as contrasted with the representations of apprehension, can be represented as an object distinct from them only if it is subject to a rule that distinguishes it from any other apprehension and that makes necessary one kind of combination of the manifold. That element in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object. (Kant, *KRV*, A190/1/B235/6)

Questions of truth with respect to the object of representation, consequently, can be asked *and answered objectively* as long as we can take this object to provide the necessary rule that allows for its distinction from every other object of representation. We thus can distinguish, in Sellars' words, between actual objects that nevertheless do not exist in themselves. This, at heart, is Kant's critical conception of objectivity.<sup>5</sup>

In what follows I will mainly try to outline Fichte's answer to this problem as given in his early Jenaer *Wissenschaftslehre* (WL). I will aim at sketching Fichte's own answer in a way that brings out the close affinity to Kant's own solution as outlined in the passage just introduced. This should not be surprising, given one takes seriously Fichte's commitment to the methodology of transcendental philosophy that he reaffirms time and again. The whole theoretical part of the *GL*, as well as the *GR* which essentially supplements it, can be read as a painstakingly in-depth argument designed to uncover the conditions of the possibility of the conscious reference to both subjects and objects of experience that underlies the claims to knowledge under investigation in the *WL*.

<sup>5</sup> Insofar as this is indeed a proper reading of both Kant and Sellars' account of Kant – and given that Fichte can indeed be plausibly read as defending and grounding a similar view, we can say that the skepticism that Robert Pippin expresses in the following statement, with respect to Sellars' own position, is somewhat premature: "Fichte's idealism in other words asserts the self-sufficiency or autonomy of, let us say, the normative domain itself what Sellars took to calling (without actually thinking through as radically as Fichte did the implications of such an autonomy claim) 'the space of reasons'" (Pippin 2000, 156).

## 2. Introduction of the Imagination in the *Grundlage*: Reciprocal Determination versus Interaction

The decisive difference to Kant's critical philosophy being, of course, that Fichte in the *Grundlage* starts from a point that is arguably presupposed in Kant's *Critiques*: the original threefold act of consciousness *qua* self-positing (thesis), counter-positing (anti-thesis), and limitation (synthesis) that finds its expression in the three principles (*Grundsätze*) that are the respective topics of the first three sections of the *GL*. The result of this exposition is the exposition of the original act of synthesis that solves the conceptual tension between the first acts of *absolute* positing, i.e., the positing of the self or I and the positing of the not-self or non-I.

The task for a third step is thus set through the first two acts: Since the first two positings are absolute positings, they threaten the unity of consciousness in each raising the specter of terminating the other. The third step, accordingly, consists in finding a way of reconciling positing and counter-positing that is able to conserve this unity. To achieve this, Fichte argues, both acts have to be *limited* with respect to each other. The resulting unity contains both a determinate self and a determinate not-self – and thus can serve as a unity of consciousness in which empirical consciousness is possible as a consciousness of a determinate object – be it a limited not-self or a limited self. This act is expressed in the third principle of knowledge: “In the I, I oppose a divisible non-I to the divisible I” (GA I,2:272; W 1:110).<sup>6</sup>

Until the third step, which involves the synthesis of the acts of positing and counter-positing, we do not yet have in place the elements necessary for an intentional relation to any determinate entities. Neither determinate objects nor determinate subjects are possible before this act of mutual limitation and, hence, determination is not possible. With the third step, we have achieved just that, though not yet in any explicit way. For it turns out that, from the perspective of the philosopher reflecting on it, the unelucidated form in which this synthesis is first introduced is insufficiently robust: On reflection, we can generate from it a whole series of contradictions that each must be resolved in order to make the original synthetic act self-consistent.

This elucidation of the third, i.e., originally synthetic principle in the *GL* proceeds by way of a dialectical process that runs through a whole series of successive acts – first of *analysis*, then of a corresponding *synthesis* – which turn out, in the end, to be but parts or aspects of the

<sup>6</sup> *Grundlage*, GA I,2:272; W 1:110, quote from Förster 2012, 186 (trans. Bowman).

original act, whose proper elucidation they result from. Only after this process has been completed and we have reached a *totality* can Fichte say of his three foundational acts of positing: "What held good before in purely problematic fashion now has an apodictic certainty" (GA I,2:262; W I,218).

The possibility of this kind of elucidation is obviously necessary if Fichte is to achieve his self-set aim of deducing the whole of the original conceptual inventory that characterizes the self-conscious subject. It turns out theoretical philosophy cannot finish this task on its own, since a "full circle," in the sense required, must not only move through all of the theoretical faculties but also proceed through all the capacities that constitute the practical faculties as well. Only in this way can the common root of both theoretical and practical faculties truly be established and the worry about the unity of systematic philosophy finally laid to rest.

The process, however, starts with a first analytic step with respect to the originally synthetic principle. The principle claimed that the I opposes a divisible non-I to the divisible I (all in the I). This principle, Fichte observes, contains two sentences, that seem to contradict each other:

(A.1) The I (in the I) posits a divisible non-I as limited by the I.

(A.2) The I (in the I) posits a divisible non-I as limiting the I.

These sentences have to be synthesized by means of developing a new synthetic concept. However, this synthesis can be achieved only at the end of the discussion of the *GL*. For, it turns out that the further analysis of the first sentence lays the foundation for the *practical WL*, whereas the analysis of the second sentence starts the investigation that forms the *theoretical* part of the *WL*. The further analytical process then proceeds by a repeated application of a method of the following general structure, starting from the original synthesis of the third principle:

- 1 Consider the original synthesis and discover the contradiction that seems not to have been dissolved by it.
- 2 Take the newly found antithetical statements and develop a synthetic concept that allows for their synthesis.
- 3 Afterwards, consider each of the antitheses in turn.
- 4 Discover the contradiction in the respective thesis.
- 5 Go on with 2.

Applying this procedure to A.2,<sup>7</sup> it can be shown immediately that A.2 itself contains this further seeming contradiction that must be synthetically

<sup>7</sup> Fichte argues that we cannot start with A.1, since we do not even know at this point how there can be reality in the non-I that is supposedly negated through determination by the I.

resolved: The I *posits* itself *as* determined *and* the I *is* *determined*, hence it is determined and determining at the same time. The resulting antithetical sentences that need to be synthesized hence are:

B.1 The I is determined by the non-I. (It is passive or suffering.)

B.2 The I is (absolutely) determining itself. (It is (absolutely) active.)

The obvious solution to this contradiction is a “positing in degrees” – with a balanced, proportional relation between positing and counter-positing. This at least *formally* solves the problem. And since proportionality is involved, there is a mutual dependence or *reciprocal determination* between positing and counter-positing.

I can set out from whichever of the opposites I please, and in either case, by an act of determination, I have simultaneously determined the other. This more determinate determination may conveniently be called *interdetermination* (Wechselbestimmung) on the analogy of interaction (Wechselwirkung). It is the same as what Kant speaks of as *relation*. (GA I,2:290; W 1:130/1)

Hence, we have introduced a new synthetic concept of interdetermination or reciprocal determination. Significantly, reciprocal determination is equated by Fichte with the Kantian category-title of *relation*, not with the category of *interaction* (reciprocity, *Wechselwirkung*) or community (*Gemeinschaft*) – it is merely analogous to the latter. The reason that Fichte states for that is that “it still leaves unanswered the question, how the self could posit negation in itself, or reality in the not-self” (GA I,2:289; W 1:130), i.e., we cannot know at this point how the non-I can be acting (activity being equated to reality by Fichte), let alone interacting with the I. It turns out that to this end, we have to be able to think of the I and the non-I as *causally interacting substances*. And this, in turn, means that we can ultimately solve the conflict between B.1 and B.2 substantially and not merely formally only *after* we have equipped the positing I with the concept of a causally independent non-I or *object of experience*. As soon as we have done that, the proper task of the *theoretical* WL will be fulfilled and A.2 will be vindicated, though the solution of the original contradiction between A.1 and A.2 will have to wait until the very end of the practical WL that ultimately allows us to regain the unity of consciousness that was thematized in the original synthetic principle.

But how does the *imagination* come into play? It is ultimately responsible for facilitating the move to a substantial synthesis that allows for the proper introduction of interaction and with it the concept of an object of experience. In order to understand how that is possible, we have to take a

step back and once again look at the methodology of the early Jenaer WL. We have so far seen how an *analytical* procedure is applied *by way of philosophical reflection* to the original synthesis, thus setting into motion an analytical process that is characterized by the looking for, and attempted dissolving of supposed contradictions along the way.

This process only comes to an end, as Fichte emphasizes, as soon as we find a contradiction that we cannot resolve by introducing a new synthetic concept anymore. Since the contradiction cannot stand, nevertheless what we need at that point is not so much a new synthetic *concept* but a new *activity* of synthesizing that was not needed before that. The introduction of this new activity marks the endpoint of the philosophical reflection that brought us here and at the same time serves as the first step in a reconstruction of the original coming-to-consciousness that Fichte calls the “pragmatic history of the human mind” (GA I,2:365; W 1:222).<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is at the same time the final artificial fact brought about by philosophical reflexion and the first “primordial fact occurring in our mind” (GA I,2:362; W 1:219). It is exactly at this point that Fichte introduces the imagination as an “original power of the I” (Förster 2012, 198).

To understand its task, let us recall in what the original opposition consisted and what the original synthesis was designed to dissolve. The original opposition was an absolute opposition where each of the opposites could only exist by terminating the other. Consequently, “our consciousness is not occupied and contains absolutely nothing whatever” (GA I,2:366; W 1:224). Since there *is* consciousness, the situation of absolute opposition is untenable and it calls for a synthesis by way of limitation. It is only *after* the synthesis, Fichte says, that “the opposites are something that can be grasped and retained in consciousness, and, as it were, occupies the same” (GA I,2:366/7; W 1:224/225).

The faculty of synthesis, for Fichte just as much as for Kant, is the imagination. The imagination is brought into the picture first as a nameless “most wondrous power of the self” (GA I,2:350; W 1:204), then as *imagination* (Einbildungskraft)<sup>9</sup> and, more precisely, as a faculty of *productive* imagination.<sup>10</sup> The more detailed analysis of this activity of imagination that follows this introduction (in GA I,2:353–61; W 1:208–17) shows it to be the “terminal result” (GA I,2:356; W 1:212) of the chain of reflections that started with the analysis of A.2.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Breazeale aptly speaks about the methodological switch at this point of the argument as “a ‘synthetic method’ of regressive analysis and ‘genetic construction’” (Breazeale 2016, 121).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. GA I,2:351; W 1:206. <sup>10</sup> Cf. GA I,2:353; W 1:208.

Fichte's analysis of this activity of the productive imagination makes apparent that the imagination is uniting in its synthesis not only two opposites but also synthesizing the very processes that make the synthesis itself possible. In other words, it unites a "clashing (*Zusammentreffen*)" (of opposites in a *boundary*) and "conjoining (*Zusammenfassen*)" (of the very same boundary *extended in a moment*, i.e., the *positing* of a boundary).<sup>11</sup> The boundary gets its reality only in the conjoining of the clashing opposites. Consequently, only the *complete* synthesis of the productive imagination provides us with a fact of consciousness that can serve as a *starting point* for the synthetic reconstruction of the synthesis by way of limitation of both I and non-I (by the I, within the I), i.e., the synthesis we need for a resolution of the absolute opposition.

The imagination, however, is *not* determining, and thus fixing, the respective boundaries, but "hovering," "wavering," or "oscillating" (*schweben*) between them: "Imagination is a faculty that wavers in the middle between determination and non-determination, between finite and infinite" (GA I,2:360; W 1:216/7). In oscillating between the opposites, the imagination makes possible the ascription of reality to the *boundary* between the opposites and, by the same token, to the opposites thus synthesized *as* opposites.<sup>12</sup>

This is the true "terminal result" of the analytic chain of reflexion: The oscillating of imagination, i.e., the first fact of consciousness – which is not merely an artificial, but a real fact – thus facilitates the complex synthetic reconstruction of the principle of consciousness that is the *pragmatic history of the human mind*.<sup>13</sup> It can serve as the starting point of this process since only the power of imagination, oscillating between opposites and thus mitigating and mediating between them, can give *reality* (not merely possibility in thought) to the opposites themselves:

Once they (i.e. the opposites; J.H.) become due for unification through the power of thought, and yet cannot be united, the wavering (*Schweben*) of the mind (*Gemüth*), which in this capacity is called imagination, confers reality upon them, since they thereby become intuitable: that is, they acquire reality in general; for there is, and can be, no other reality save that derived through intuition (*vermitteltst der Anschauung*). (GA I,2:368; W 1:226)

We have thus, by means of the productive imagination, reached a point where we can finally *begin* to answer "the question, how the self could posit negation in itself, or reality in the not-self" (GA I,2:289; W 1:130),

<sup>11</sup> Cf. GA I,2:357; W 1:213.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. step (3) in section III of the *Deduction of Representation* subsequently.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. GA I,2:365; W 1:222.

and thus how the non-I eventually can be conceived as an active part in a complex interaction (*Wechselwirkung*).

However, we still have to (1) work out the details of this ascription of reality in order to transgress the state of oscillation, as surely is necessary for the aim of establishing the concept of a representation of an independently existing object of experience for the I. And (2) we have not yet heard anything about the reason for the imagination to engage in its synthetic oscillation in the first place.

Let me very briefly sketch an answer to the second problem first. Fichte claims that as a condition of the possibility of this behavior of the imagination, all that is needed is a completely abstract concept of a "check (*Anstoß*) on the self (*für das Ich*)" (GA I,2:355; W 1:210). This concept has been hotly contested in the literature. Eckart Förster reminds us with respect to the function of this concept in the *GL* that it is a purely transcendental philosophical framework.<sup>14</sup> Its role in the theoretical part of the *WL* is completely restricted to checking the self's activity, so that the self cannot extend any further and, as it were, turns back onto itself: "its activity, though by no means to be extinguished thereby, is reflected, driven inwards; it takes exactly the reverse direction" (GA I,2:369; W 1:228). However, the check does *only* that; in particular, it does not itself set a boundary to the activity of the self. Rather, the check gives the self "the task of setting bounds to itself" (GA I,2:355; W 1:210). The check is, consequently, not contributing in any way to the content of the boundary or either the I or the non-I that are opposed at this very boundary. (Hence, it would be a mistake to equate the check with an abstracted version of a Kantian thing-in-itself.) The check only serves as an incentive for the I to determine itself and thus to establish a boundary between the I and the non-I within itself, in that way conferring reality both to the I *and* the non-I.

With that in mind, let us now turn to answering the first problem above: We have to work out the details of this ascription of reality in order to establish the concept of a representation of an independently existing object of experience for the I. Note that this step is decisive for our overarching aim of giving a reading of Fichte that allows both for a solution to the problem of applicability and the problem of objectivity. The problem of applicability can be seen as solved at least in broad outline: We have an activity of productive imagination that forms the foundation of the conception of the non-I or the "objective (*das objektive*)"

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Förster 2011, 214.



(GA I,2:354; W 1:210). How the “objective” can be represented as an independently existing object still is elusive at best.

### 3. The Deduction of Representation in the *Grundlage*

Fichte outlines the necessary steps in a very dense part of the text under the headline *Deduction of Representation*, situated at the very end of the theoretical part of the *GL*. This passage contains the core of the aforementioned pragmatic history of the mind, i.e., a history of consciousness not as an object of philosophical reflection, but, as it were, from the perspective of the mind that is first coming into being itself (natural consciousness, one might say).<sup>15</sup> Things, of course, are complicated since it is, after all, a philosophical reconstruction of this coming-into-being of consciousness. Fichte and his readers have constantly to be aware of this complication – a complication that did not plague us in the context of the philosophical reflection in the analytical part of the *GL*. It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to give this intricate passage anything like the close reading it deserves. Instead, I will try to outline the essential line of thought in very broad strokes, as structured by its different sections, in order to make visible its relevance for the problem of objectivity.<sup>16</sup>

3.1 Immediately before the *Deduction*, Fichte directly addresses Maimon’s skeptical worry (without calling him by name):

Our doctrine here is therefore that all reality – *for us* . . . as it cannot be otherwise understood in a system of transcendental philosophy – is brought forth solely by the imagination. One of the greatest thinkers of our age, whose teaching, as I understand it, is the same, calls this a deception on the part of the imagination. But to every deception, a truth must be opposed, and there must be a means of escaping it. (GA I,2:368/9; W 1:227)

<sup>15</sup> Christian Klotz describes the purpose of this section comprehensively as follows: “(T)he various faculties of the mind are presented in a systematic order, showing how they build on one another in such a way that the characteristics of our perceptual relation to objects and of the self-consciousness involved in it become comprehensible as a result of the cooperation of these faculties” (2016, 80). However, it is important that these faculties are not merely presented in systematic order – they are *derived* from the first natural fact of consciousness. In that way, as Robert Pippin forcefully puts it, Fichte “puts the entire question ‘within the space of reasons,’ eliminates the given, and attacks the reliance on faculty language still plaguing Kantianism” (Pippin 2000, 157).

<sup>16</sup> There are at least four detailed reconstructions of the *Deduction of Representation* in the literature on Fichte: Cleages 1974, ch. 7; Metz 1991, 324–54; Schäfer 2006, 167–91; and Förster 2011, 202–7. What follows is strongly committed to Eckart Förster’s reading. However, unlike Förster (and Metz) I largely leave the *GR* out of the picture and stick to the more abstract exposition in the *GL*. I will, at the end of my discussion, briefly indicate why the contribution of the *GR* nevertheless provides an important additional layer of transcendental analysis.

Fichte starts his attempt at escaping this conclusion by taking stock (section I): The check on the absolute activity of the I, starting from a point A, turned this activity back, *reflected* it,<sup>17</sup> in a certain point C. (A and C are defined solely by being the starting point of the activity of the I and the point of return, respectively. Their sole function in what follows is to serve as points of origin for the original self-activity (A) and the decisive change it undergoes in C.)

The immediate reaction of the essentially active I to this reflection of activity has to be to once more return the activity thus reflected toward C. This back and forth between A and C, between mutually dependent activity and passivity, is the oscillating activity of the imagination we already encountered. The state of the I in this situation is an *intuiting* (*Anschauen*) that is completely undetermined with respect to its subject as well as its object.

The task Fichte sets to himself in the *Deduction of Representation* can be described as distinguishing perspectives on this intuiting of the productive imagination that ultimately allow us to discern all the elements in this process that are necessary for determined intuitive reference to objects *and* to ourselves as representing subjects. In this way, representation is *deduced*.

3.2 In a second step (section II), Fichte observes that the I must *posit* itself *as intuiting* and hence as *active*. It can do so only by distinguishing itself from something with respect to which it takes itself to be *passive*, i.e., an *intuited non-I*. Unbeknownst to itself, it thus *produces* (*produziert*) (by means of the productive imagination) something *intuited*.

However, both the reflected (hence conscious) activity of intuiting and the unreflected (hence unconscious) activity of producing something intuited – both of them being activities of intuiting, but in very different senses – are ultimately “simultaneously . . . present in one and the same act” (GA I,2:372; W 1:230) of intuition. How is that possible? And how can the intuited product of imagination that is conceived as resisting the reflected activity of the subject, hence as movement from C to A, be distinguished from the first reflection from C back to A in reaction to the check?

3.3 The latter solution ultimately must rely on the distinction between what is purely *reactive* (check) versus the purely *spontaneous* (production of

<sup>17</sup> There is a complication involved in Fichte's use of reflection in this context: He uses reflection both in the way we speak about the reflection in a mirror (verb: reflecting), indicating the direction back from C to A; and as reflection (verb: reflecting) in the sense of being conscious of something *as* something. I will try to distinguish the two uses in what follows.

the intuited). However, this distinction is not yet available to the I under investigation. The question is, how we can deduce this distinction *as a fact of natural consciousness*. The distinction, Fichte emphasizes (*section III*), entails the reference to something intuited as something *fixated* (*fixiert*). And, as something fixated, it is both distinguishable from the original check that led to the oscillation of the imagination *and* presupposes this activity, thus conserving the original reaction to the check. In this way, the oscillation of the productive imagination is, as it were, sublated in its product, i.e., the *intuited qua* intuited or represented.

The power whose sole purpose in Fichte's *WL* is this fixation for further determination by reason is the *understanding*. It marks the transition from the ideal to the real, since it first allows for the determinate distinction between the I and the non-I from the perspective of natural consciousness and hence the ascription of reality to both.

3.4 Fichte goes on (in *section IV*) to substantiate this thought by sketching the elements that together allow for the *transition* from the activity of the I to the ascription of (still undetermined) reality to the non-I *via* the fixation of intuition. He proceeds in six steps:

- (1) The I starts with the reflectively conscious activity of *intuiting* as limited by C (reflected intuiting).
- (2) It proceeds by positing its very own product *beyond C as a non-I*, thus limiting its own reflected intuiting "by means of a dark, unreflected intuition that does not reach determinate consciousness" (GA I,2:375; W 1:235) and making possible "the logical subject of the proposition: the self intuits" (*ibid.*).
- (3) The productive activity to this end has to be *fixated* by the understanding as an intuited that contains elements from both directions of activity (A to C and C to A). In this step, the imagination is not productive anymore, but merely reproductive. (It reproduces the boundary between intuiting I and non-I *as a fixated intuited*.)
- (4) The activities in question so far are only distinguished by their respective *direction*. Thus, the direction from C to A has been "occasioned by reflection from without, and conserved (*aufbehalten*) in the understanding" (GA I,2:376; W 1:236) as intuited (whose source is projected to be one "from without," i.e., from somewhere *beyond C*).
- (5) In order to *determine* the reflected intuiting (from A to C) as such, we have to distinguish it from the intuited, i.e., we have to ascribe the traces of the opposite activity from C to A – traces that are contained

in the fixated intuited – to the activity of a non-I that, again, is taken to lie beyond C.

- (6) To this end, we have to *determine* not only the intuiting but also the *intuited*. The intuited can be taken to be determined only *by the non-I*, i.e., something that is by its very definition itself *not* intuited because it lies “beyond C as an absolute product of the self’s activity” (GA I,2:376/7; W 1:236/7). It is through this determination by a non-I that we finally can think the intuited “as something real” (GA I,2:377; W 1:237).

With this part of the deduction we are back to the concept of *reciprocal determination*: Intuiting and intuited “are mutually related as activity and passivity (reality and negation), and hence are united through interdetermination” (GA I,2:377; W 1:237).

But interdetermination still is *neutral* with respect to the distinction of intuiting and intuited we want to establish: It is a determination that, as it were, cuts both ways. Hence, we still are lacking a “firm ground of distinction between the intuitant (anschauenden) and the intuited (angeschauten)” (GA I,2:377; W 1:237).

3.5 In the brief section that follows these considerations (*section V*), Fichte works out the peculiar *relation of interdetermination* in intuition by investigating it from the perspectives of the intuiting and of the intuited, respectively (as he must since we have not yet overcome the conceptual symmetry between the two perspectives).

For the *perspective of the intuiting*, he introduces the distinction between the already determined *objective activity* of the self-conscious intuiting subject and its non-objective, *pure* or *absolute activity* that facilitated the determination of the objective activity in the first place. While the latter thus is the real ground (Realgrund) of the former, the former is the determining ground (Bestimmungsgrund) of the latter. As activity, it becomes conscious only *via* its being objectively active. The interdetermination of objective and pure activity constitutes the boundary between the two that is “intuited by the imagination, fixated by the understanding” (GA I,2:378; W 1:238), i.e., the intuition (viewed from the perspective of the intuiting, hence as representation). The interdetermination is thus generating the condition under which the intuiting becomes as such objective, representational activity (but not object or represented!).

A similar reasoning holds for the *perspective of the intuited*: Due to the interdetermination with the intuiting, the intuited is likewise not the pure opposite of a pure activity (and as such absolute passivity, thing-in-itself

*qua* projected noumenal pendant of the intuited), but merely the opposite of objective, intuiting activity. Again, no absolute distinction between the two perspectives was found.

3.6 Fichte starts, what is for the purposes of our discussion, the decisive step in his deduction (*section VI*) by observing that from what has been said it follows that pure activity as conditioned by the intuition is losing its state of purity. Some of this activity is itself turned into *passivity*: “Hence the condition of all objective activity is a passivity (Leiden)” (GA I,2:378; W 1:238). It is this passivity that somehow has to become the object of the intuition.

But how can we intuit passivity (Leiden)? Only as the “impossibility of the opposed activity; a feeling of being compelled to a specific act, of which feeling the imagination is certainly capable” (GA I,2:378; W 1:238/9). This *feeling of compulsion*, as fixated by the understanding, is *necessity*; as *oscillating* of the imagination between apprehension and non-apprehension of an object, it is conceived by the understanding as *possibility*. These two activities – *compulsion* to a specific act and *freedom* of choice with respect to the apprehension of an object – need to be synthesized. With respect to the *intuiting* (by the subject of intuition) the synthesis is formed like this:

- (1) Self-determination *qua* free determination of one’s own activity (*self-affection*)
- (2) Compulsion (by check) (*affection*)
- (3) Since the check (2) is a necessary, though not sufficient condition of the self-determination (1), *intuiting* depends on a mutual determination of affection and self-affection (*interaction*).

And the *intuited or object of intuition* can now, by way of corollary, be characterized as follows:

- (1) The thing-in-itself is thought as passive *qua* being determined by the intuiting I (*intuiting*).
- (2) The thing-in-itself is thought as pure activity *qua* being an absolute non-I (*affection*).
- (3) Since affection (2) is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for intuiting (1), the *intuited* depends on a mutual determination of intuiting and affection (*interaction*).

Consequently, in the course of this synthesis, we have established the concept of a determined that is intuited as an *object of intuition*. In other words, “the thing in and for itself is an object of intuition under a condition of interaction” (GA I,2:379; W 1:239). Note that, in order to

arrive at that concept, we were forced to introduce the concept of *interaction* that is *not* merely mutual determination *qua* relation.

3.7 However, we still can conceive of *both* the intuiting and the intuited as active or passive, depending on which activity we start with. Not even the turn to interaction has given us the absolute, asymmetrical distinguishability between intuited and intuiting we have been looking for. We have indeed arrived at a substantial causal interaction between the two elements in the intuitive process (the intuiting subject and the intuited object). And we can go further (*section VII*) and accept that we have to think of both interacting entities as *causally active substances or substrata*.<sup>18</sup> But we still have not been able to break the symmetry that stands in the way of ultimately characterizing the intuiting and the intuited differently.

3.8 The next step in our reconstruction of the natural consciousness (*section VIII*) is the transition from intuiting to *judging* (or thinking)<sup>19</sup> and, correspondingly, from an *object of intuition* to an *object of thought* or judgment. Judging is essentially an activity of determination or, more precisely, an "activity of self-determination for purposes of determining a determinate object" (GA I,2:380; W 1:241). As such, it is characterized by a freedom of choice with respect to the determinate thinking of the object of intuition that is fixated by the understanding.<sup>20</sup> It, consequently, is first and foremost, a thinking of *an object in general*, not a determinate object.

The power of judgment (*Urteilkraft*) "is the capacity, free till now, of reflecting upon objects already posited in understanding, or of abstracting from them, and, on the strength of this reflection or abstraction, of positing these objects more determinately in understanding" (GA I,2:381; W 1:242). The object already posited in the understanding is the object of intuition. It can only now, in a reciprocal determination of understanding and power of judgment, be *determined* by the power of judgment *as an object*. The fixation of an object of intuition by the understanding thus can become an object of thought only through the power of judgment:

Nothing in understanding, no judgment; no judgment, nothing in understanding *for the understanding*; no thinking of what is thought, as such. (GA I,2:381; W 1:242)

<sup>18</sup> Cf. GA I,2:380; W 1:241.

<sup>19</sup> Fichte in the context of the *Deduction of Representation* uses the term *thinking* to refer to the characteristic activity of the power of judgment in general.

<sup>20</sup> Again, insofar as it is in the process of determining its choice, it is oscillating and, hence, is another transformation of the power of imagination; insofar as it must ultimately come to a determination, it is fixating and, hence, the work of the understanding.

From this vantage point, we can reassess the concept of an *object*. We already had arrived (in natural consciousness) at the concept of an object of intuition, something intuited, that was the effect of an interaction between intuiting and non-I as the cause of the intuition. Now we can recast this concept as the *object of thought* (Objekt des Denkens), that is the effect of an interaction between thinking (or judging) and the merely thinkable (bloß denkbare) that is thought as the cause of this thought.

The merely thinkable is not an object of thought right now and, importantly, has “the ground of its thinkability in itself” (GA I,2:381; W 1:242) and not in the thinking subject. So here we re-encounter the theme of independent existence of whatever we take to be causally responsible for the object of our representation, be it intuition or thought: “Only what is judged to be thinkable can be thought of as a cause of intuition” (GA I,2:381; W 1:243).

3.9 Again, interaction does not help to get rid of the symmetry that still prohibits a clear distinction between subject and object, intuiting and intuited, thinking and object of thought. But the process of *abstraction*, set into motion by the transition from intuiting (of a determinate object) to thinking/judging (of an object in general), opens up a new line of thought that might finally help to break the deadlock (*section IX*). We already had to introduce the concept of a pure, non-objective activity in the elucidation of the self-determination of the objective activity. It is to this absolute, object-free activity we have to turn in order to conceive of a complete abstraction from *every object whatsoever*.

What is left, given that we abstract from every determination of the oscillating imagination and even from the oscillating itself? There cannot be any intuitive content left since all intuitive content is already a fixation/determination. Nevertheless, Fichte insists, we must still be aware (if only darkly) of a conscious activity (which, for lack of an alternative, has to be an intuitive activity of imagination, though the natural consciousness is not aware of it as such).<sup>21</sup> What is left at this point is “nothing . . . beyond the mere rule of reason in general” (GA I,2:382; W 1:244).

Therefore, it is this absolute power of abstraction (reason) that affords us a concept of “what determines itself and is determined by itself, the self or subject” (ibid.). As such, this ability of abstraction is “the manifest source of all self-consciousness” (GA I,2:383; W 1:244). And this concept,

<sup>21</sup> There is a somewhat misleading addition in the later Gabler-edition of the work that is referencing Kant’s conception of pure reason “without imagination” (GA I,2:382). Does that imply that the imagination is not in play here after all? Not quite: The activity itself might very well be one ‘without imagination’ and yet it can be intuited ‘in a dark way’ by the imagination.

finally (!), allows us to distinguish between subject and object in a principled way that establishes the asymmetry that we have been looking for: There simply is no corresponding possibility to completely abstract from everything subjective and leave only the non-self or object!

3.10 While we thereby have reconstructed within the natural consciousness the distinction between a representing subject and a represented object, and hence have deduced the concept of a representation, we are still left with a tension that the theoretical WL alone cannot solve. Let us put the solution into perspective by connecting it with the task set by the analytic process we began our discussion of the argument of the GL with. The unresolved conflict *within* theoretical WL was posed by the antithetical propositions that grew out of the analysis of A.2:

B.1 The I is determined by the non-I. (It is passive or suffering.)

B.2 The I is (absolutely) determining itself. (It is active absolutely.)

After our discussion of the *Deduction of Representation*, we can now see how these two propositions can be synthetically united in the concept of a representation. The formal structure of this solution was a balanced, proportional relation between positing and counter-positing, self-determination and determination. And this is exactly what we now can conceive of on the basis of our deduction of the activity of imagination in terms of an *interaction* between I and non-I:

B. (Synthesis) The I is determining itself as interacting with, hence determining and determined by, the non-I.

3.11 However, this way of solving the antithesis at the same time highlights an *intrinsic subjectivity* of the concept of an object of representation that cannot be completely dissolved in theoretical WL alone: “the self, insofar as it may be either finite or infinite, is reciprocally related merely to itself: a reciprocity in which it is perfectly united with itself, and beyond which no theoretical philosophy advances any further” (GA I,2:384; W 1:245).

#### 4. Conclusion

Nevertheless, we have found the essential ingredients for a robust conception of an object of representation (in the Sellarsian/Kantian sense) that can both be clearly distinguished from the self-determining subject that is doing the representing *and* that can be conceived of as a substance or substratum that is causally interacting with the representing subject.

In the GR, Fichte adds to this the necessary spatiotemporality of the interacting substances. This is by no means an insignificant addition.



Interestingly, it directly follows Fichte's successful deduction of the distinction between representation and "real thing (wirkliches Ding)" (GA I,3:188; W 1:386) and the explicit interpretation of this deduction as a refutation of Maimon's skepticism.<sup>22</sup> The representing subject and the represented object, which have been deduced in this way, are not yet duly determined since the ultimate deduction only gave us the concepts of things (objects of thought) in general.

As Fichte makes clear in introductory considerations of the *GR*, this abstraction can only be lifted if we turn from the general fact of a production of an object in general to the determination of a particular (besonderes) factum that is the generation of particular objects. These objects *qua* particular objects share certain general characteristics that we could not get into view by abstracting from this particularity.

An object in general, as we have seen, is categorically characterized by its substantiality and its causality. With respect to particular objects (and the representations of the thinking subject that intuits them), Fichte now (in section 4 of the *GR*) deduces the principle of their spatiotemporal determination *qua* causally interacting substances. Hence, we can think of space and time as indirectly deduced by way of the deduction of schematized categories – a deduction that is an integral part of a *specific* (besondere) theoretical *WL*, which is needed in order to fill in some of the gaps of the theoretical part of the *WL*.

Turning back to the point from which we started, we can observe by way of conclusion that, since Fichte incorporates the thing-in-itself in the act of original synthesis in the way sketched above, he can talk simply about the existence of the object of representation as existence in-itself. The Sellarsian distinction, implicit in Kant, between actual existence and existence in-itself, collapses in this way.

However important that may ultimately be for assessing the difference between Kant and Fichte,<sup>23</sup> it does not endanger the affinity between their respective solutions to the problem of objectivity with which we started our considerations. As such, the intrinsic subjectivity with which we are left does not threaten the conception of objectivity from the perspective of the natural consciousness whose pragmatic history we just have reconstructed.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. GA I,3:189–91; W 1:387–9.

<sup>23</sup> If we take into account the further development of Kant's transcendental idealism up to its final transformation in the reflections of the *Opus postumum*, this distinction might be dissolving as well. Cf. Förster 1985, 302.

## *The Kantian Roots of Hegel's Theory of the Imagination*

*Meghant Sudan*

Although Hegel long railed against tedious scholasticism and thoughtless empiricism, his own philosophy of spirit or mind (*Geist*) often reads like a quaint compendium of dusty definitions. “Self-feeling is . . .,” “Derangement is . . .,” “Imagination is . . .” – thus dragged the third part of his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline* into an obscurity from which it is only recently being rescued. This following is one such rescue effort in which I frame Hegel’s account of the imagination against its better-known Kantian background. This should restore to it some of its lost shine, but, to really come to life again, it should also clarify some things about the Kantian account in turn. To this end, I hope to show how both thinkers tackled the twin threat of empirical and rational psychology through efforts rooted in the imagination as a mediator between sensible and conceptual domains.

One will protest that the differences between the two thinkers are irreconcilable; hence, talk of roots at best gestures banally to the fact that Hegel wrote in the Kantian aftermath. After all, Hegel’s imagination is a case of fully developed self-consciousness, whereas Kant’s imagination sinks to unfathomable depths of mind. Hegel’s criticisms of Kant’s inability to rein in psychologizing tendencies, despite the great discoveries about the principles and forms of *a priori* synthesis, circle around Kant’s theory of the imagination. This is because Kant’s view of the imagination, as a synthesizing device of sorts, merely confirms to Hegel’s eyes the paucity of an understanding that is entrenched in fixed oppositions and unable to express what Hegel upholds as true rational unity. The substance of this critique has remained pertinent since its early articulation in Hegel’s *Faith and Knowledge* and would appear to prevent rather than enable reconciliation around the topic.

To allay these concerns, we should show that both theories of the imagination were equally invested in following the trail of self-consciousness to an account of integrated subjectivity. Showing how Kant’s theory battled

empirical and rational psychology jointly, not separately, will bring it yet closer to Hegel's own theory of subjective mind devised explicitly to reject the two disciplines in one blow.<sup>1</sup> Securing these perspectives establishes a shared theoretical context for the imagination, but to dismiss charges of banal generalization we should show specific points of correspondence between the two theories. Accordingly, I examine Kant's doctrine of the threefold synthesis, and the related doctrine of self-affection, to show that Hegel's account of the imagination and its surrounding theory of mind reworks these very doctrines.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Imagination in Kant's Transcendental Deductions

Imagination, for Kant, is in some basic sense the source of all combination: "synthesis as such is . . . the mere effect of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul . . . of which we are rarely conscious."<sup>3</sup> Kant qualifies this variously, saying that "all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not . . . is an action of the understanding,"<sup>4</sup> which seems to conflict with the first statement, or by saying that it is "one and the same spontaneity, which . . . [synthesizes] there under the name of the imagination, and here of the understanding," which makes one wonder if there is anything more to the imagination than the name.<sup>5</sup> Qualifications notwithstanding, these statements characterize the imagination primarily as a synthetic capacity. Others charge it with bringing up absent objects, e.g., when Kant defines it strictly as "the faculty for representing in intuition an object even without its presence,"<sup>6</sup> or when he describes it with more latitude as covering visualizations of past and future states, the inventions of signs, etc.<sup>7</sup> Generally, then, imagination is a capacity of combining and calling up objects, while further details about it have to be drawn from elaborations in particular contexts.

The central text of the critical context is the Transcendental Deduction presented in the 1781 (A) and 1787 (B) editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The differences between the two editions court perennial controversy. Kant claims that they are merely stylistic,<sup>8</sup> but this view has few takers. Roughly (and treading lightly through the controversies in the following), the differences respond to worries about the first version having

<sup>1</sup> Enz section 378.

<sup>2</sup> This seems to escape general notice, but is noted in passing by Michael Wolff, 2013: 98n.14.

<sup>3</sup> A78/B103. <sup>4</sup> B130. <sup>5</sup> B162n. <sup>6</sup> B151 (translation modified).

<sup>7</sup> *Anthropology*, 60–89 (Ak.7:167–96). <sup>8</sup> Bxxxvii–xxxviii.

suggested a mysterious dark core of the mind, a primordial ground of mental action and identity, which the B-version tries to bring to light, to self-consciousness, to a structural lightness of intellectual functions.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the revisions arguably overcompensate and engender false impressions about a mind whose actions overdetermine all inner content and whose harsh glare washes over the peculiar indeterminacy of subjective life inside and outside the self.

The problem of the Deduction is to show that the pure forms of thinking (pure concepts of the understanding or the categories) hold of certain things (appearances) to enable *a priori* knowledge. Appearances are given sensibly through empirical intuitions and constitutively ordered through pure sensible forms of intuition (space and time). Because Kant distinguishes strongly between sensibility and understanding, the constitution of appearance, depending only on the former, may have nothing to do with how objects are constituted through the understanding. It is thus possible that *thoughts* about them happen to be thoughts *about them* merely contingently. The rationalist, starting from the pure thought of a possible thing, faces this problem of reference as much as the empiricist who holds that certain things are given prior to thought. Showing a necessary agreement of pure thought with given objects will foreclose this possibility. Thus, the Deduction argues that the structure of pure thought as it is applied to a given object in general fully agrees with the structure of how objects are given to sense by relating both sides of this equation to a concept of self-consciousness. Both editions contain this same main argument, but when Kant rewrote the Deduction entirely to make it more legible, he also brought discrepancies to light.

A brief review of the composition of the B-Deduction pinpoints affected areas. It proceeds in two parts, according to the two sides of the said equation held together through apperception. After a short preliminary note on varieties of synthesis (section 15), the first part proceeds through the following stages: (a) to the discovery of the general principle of synthesis in the concept of apperception that conditions any sensible intuition (section 16), (b) to show this principle as an objective condition of consciousness (section 17), (c) to distinguish objective from subjective conditions of consciousness (section 18), (d) to find that the form of judgment endorses objective conditions of consciousness (section 19),

<sup>9</sup> For a clear and helpfully annotated account of how the B-Deduction downplays a supposedly intemperately activistic account of imagination in the course of reformulating the doctrine of self-consciousness to suit a more temperate account, see Ameriks 1983.

and (e) from all this concludes (section 20) that objective conditions of consciousness entail that a sensible intuition stands under the categories. The second part of the B-Deduction looks to the subjective conditions of consciousness and, by clarifying the presupposition used in the first part about a sensible intuition in general, claims to complete the argument begun in the first part. Kant articulates the restriction on *a priori* cognition through categories to possible experience (sections 22–3) and gives an account of the condition of this restriction by describing the determination of the receptivity of sensibility through the spontaneity of the understanding (section 24). After revisiting the concept of apperception under these circumstances (section 25), Kant concludes from all this that the synthesis of apprehension, or the empirical consciousness of sensible intuition under spatiotemporal forms, stands under the categories (section 26).

The A-Deduction, by contrast, is less streamlined, amassing preliminary remarks and principles and definitions before (and while) laying out the main argument. The main argument proceeds in a two-step way like the B-Deduction. First, the argument moves from the principle of apperception through the logical form of all cognition to the necessity of the categories for this form. Second, the argument moves from sensible apprehension in consciousness through the latter's grounding in self-consciousness to the necessity of the categories for experience. The salient differences between the two Deductions are as follows: (1) The A-Deduction provides a rich account of the uptake of sensible data into empirical consciousness, the so-called doctrine of the threefold synthesis, which reveals a set of pure synthetic actions of mind. (2) The A-Deduction misses a lucid account of how the categories come into play, since Kant embeds them in intricate reflections on objectivity as such or reflections on the extensively tiered roles of the imagination synthesizing representations, and embeds both these reflections in each other as well. (3) The B-Deduction abbreviates the doctrine of threefold synthesis and confines it to the second half of the Deduction, while explaining the role of the categories more smoothly through a discussion of judgment in the first half. (4) The B-Deduction subsumes the doctrine of synthesis under the topic of possible experience as a condition restricting categories, which condition is expressed as the application of pure intuition to empirical intuition and in terms of the interplay of spontaneity to receptivity, so that we can talk of the “self-affecting” relation of understanding to sensibility, with the imagination as the locus of this mediation. (5) The resounding battle-cry “I think” dominates the B-Deduction, even if the principle of the synthetic unity of apperception symbolized by it plays just as crucial a role in the A-Deduction.

Thus, it looks like the later version curtails the rich synthetic activity of the imagination and its grounding in a conveniently assumed numerical identity of the subject in favor of a sober theoretical consciousness that proceeds through the epistemology of self-ascription, concept formation, and object predication. Resultantly, the doctrine of self-affection, which was implicit in the idea of a threefold synthesis tying passive and active dimensions of mind together, appears to belong to the later version's intellectualizing tendency, even if somewhat inconsistently. For, while this doctrine in the B-Deduction asserts that the understanding affects sensibility across the divide between them, this intellectual determination involves a synthesis through a sensibly loaded imagination, a figurative and not purely intellectual synthesis. At the same time, the intellectual determination explains the coordination of empirical intuitions with pure intuitions as not only a sensible affair but as falling under the principle of apperception, because, as Kant mentions nonchalantly, pure intuitions themselves fall under this principle.

All this is not a result of confusion but of Kant's eagerness to expel traces of a substantial self in favor of determinations of consciousness. The revisions, however, obscure how the doctrine of self-affection envisions a subtle spread of reflective mindedness in a bid to return us to the picture of an *integrated* mind that drove the A-Deduction's misleading descriptions of the self as a numerically identical ground. To give a better sense of what this reflected mindedness is like, let us consider how the doctrine of self-affection and threefold synthesis are connected, how they belong to a view of mind contesting prevailing systems of psychology, and how, on that view, the imagination is a central node within a complex of receptive and reflective functions.

## 2. Self-Affection and the Reflective Life of Mind

To see how the doctrine of self-affection is implicated in a scene of reflection, let us first consider it in a context already made significant by the fact that Kant introduces it in the B-edition, in remarks added to the chapter on sensibility.<sup>10</sup> Here, Kant seeks to confirm the ideality of space and time by considering the ideality of outer sense and then of inner sense and concluding that even the self is given to the self, like all sensible objects, as appearance. We expect this result, since this just restates the difference between pure and empirical apperception, but here it is recalled

<sup>10</sup> B66–9.

to emphasize that the latter is receptive and is unable to originate forms of thinking. Yet, Kant's way of arguing is curious: He focuses on the connection between outer and inner sense, treating them not separately, but as moments of a reflection operative at the sensible level. Instead of the distinction of outer and inner intuition, Kant starts by examining *intuition as such*.<sup>11</sup> He uses the concept of self-affection to help think about the form of intuiting as an activity occurring under the conditions of an active pure self-consciousness and a passive outer sense.

Using general claims that the intuition-related contents of our cognition are relations<sup>12</sup> and that relations do not give us things in themselves, Kant develops a paradox that describes each sense: There is no object (for the content is just relations) and yet there is an object (for the cognition is given through intuition).<sup>13</sup> However, Kant treats outer and inner sense differently. For outer sense, Kant starts with intuition as such, which represents a sum of relations. Abstracting from the wealth of these relations, I come to the concept of a form of (outer) sense, which is merely the concept of an object in relation to the subject. The treatment of inner sense is more intriguing. Setting aside the question of content, Kant attends to the form of inner sense and tries to affirm its subjectivity from its pure temporality. Here, Kant begins with time as a formal condition of empirical consciousness and develops the paradox of intuition from this. Predating all thought (which can posit contents in the mind as a spontaneity) and consisting entirely of relations, the representation of time signifies the form of intuition as such. This form refers to an object only when representations are given to the mind. Abstracting from any outer source of representations, however, this necessity is only met with through the mind's representation of itself to itself. So, Kant claims, time as a form

<sup>11</sup> This term does special work in the B-Deduction. The A-Deduction takes the possibility of experience (to guarantee objectivity) as its principle. Although not entirely clear, possible experience seems to represent a whole of objectivity for thought analogous to the wholeness of space and time. The B-Deduction separates possible experience (developing the concept in section 22) from the issue of a whole of objectivity (developing this differently through the doctrine of apperception in section 16), even as references to the former remain in the book overall. This creates more questions than answers, but, minimally, I take these as symptoms of rethinking an older psychological concept of "total perception," which has cosmological and theological connotations that come together in the Transcendental Dialectic. For the present, it is only important to note that the term bears these marks of provenance and structural revisions. Providing more answers than questions, Alison Laywine's rigorous analyses of the *Duisburg Nachlass* (2005, fn. 21; 2006) show that that metaphysical notion of a whole and related psychological questions harken back to pre-critical thoughts about *world* and intermittently persist in the A-Deduction.

<sup>12</sup> A285/B341. <sup>13</sup> Notice how this problematic defines the imagination.

for the way we posit representations in the mind entails that this form is itself conditioned by self-affection and is *thus* an inner sense.

The whole train of thought rests on the metaphysical category *appearance*. Further, it uses the concept of an *intuition as such* to derive both outer sense and inner sense as that which is conditioned *a priori* by a self-affecting mind. Kant is concerned to explain how an act of introspection can find contents given in the mind, where, in such *finding*<sup>14</sup> the mind at once gives itself an intuition of itself and orders this manifold in temporal relations. Kant's point is that representations of outer sense do not show things in themselves and self-consciousness cannot get past the appearance of oneself. Yet, equally important are his points about the mind as self-affecting and about sense as a subjectively turned content and a nascent reflection. Indeed, situating reflection within the sensible order is crucial for Kant's claim that the "faculty for becoming conscious of oneself" is "affected *from within*,"<sup>15</sup> whereby the B-Deduction clarifies that the understanding does not determine inner sense from itself but in a way internal to sensibility itself.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Kant's account of the outer and inner sense depicts the mind as having a receptive dimension and a partly active, partly passive, or self-affective dimension at once. It even appears that the second radicalizes a possibility latent in the first, expressing the subjective character of its still outward form more sharply and in terms of an adequacy of that content to the inner form of reflection, so as to make possible a representation (time), whose content is now a pure self-relating form, where mind is as active as it is passive. Of course, to put it like this would agree with Hegel quite well, and more so if we do not view formal processes as spontaneously generative. The representation of time needs concrete sensible input. The activity of coordinating this input leads to the representation, rather than the representation residing in the mind as an innate idea.<sup>17</sup> The concrete material may itself be formal, such as when we *attend* to the spatial intuition of a line to represent time. Further, the immediacy of temporal determinations through inner sense entails the immediacy of spatial determinations through outer sense, a common refrain in Kant's various refutations of idealism.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel will play with "finding" in his wide-ranging account of sensation (*Empfindung*), which funds the higher levels of soul in standard psychology as well.

<sup>15</sup> B69, *my emphasis*. On why this *should* be Kant's view, see Kern 2006. On how this view as a set of psychological claims is compatible with Kant's metaphysical commitments, see Indregard 2017.

<sup>16</sup> B153. <sup>17</sup> As Kant explains in his *Inaugural Dissertation* (Ak 2:401).



Self-affection lets Kant go yet further in treating the mind as an organization of reflection and receptivity rather than an imperial self-sufficiency of the intellect. The *Leningrad Fragment* brings together the thoughts of self-affection and refutation of idealism in the course of examining the connection of inner and outer sense *and* refers to the older doctrine of the soul as an embodied power of representing the universe. It explains that, while self-affection answers to sensible mindedness in general, current empirical consciousness is cosmologically oriented through the immediate inference from inner reception to outer sense contents.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Kant talks of a concrete self-perception containing determinations of duration of both my existence and the outer world. He distinguishes this “cosmological apperception” from psychological apperception, which logically asserts the existence implicit in the subject’s claim to think. Readers of the B-Deduction are accustomed to the latter through the discussion of the “I am” in section 25, following the discussion of the “I think” in section 16. The subjectivity in relation to the external world, however, recalls the very words “I think” with which Baumgarten launches his empirical psychology and sets up the Leibniz-Wolffian concept of the soul as a power of representation, whose inner states are tuned to outer states of a world that the soul represents from the position of its body.<sup>19</sup> A legacy of Cartesianism guides our view of Kant’s “I think” through the critique of rational psychology, and causes us to overlook the reference to Baumgarten’s “I think” and the confrontation of transcendental philosophy with empirical *and* rational psychology.<sup>20</sup> Restoring the latter to view

<sup>18</sup> *Leningrad Fragment*, II.9–12: “To be affected presupposes necessarily something outer, hence rests thoroughly on a sense. The fact that we can affect ourselves (which must be at least assumed, if a sense is to exist at all) is only possible by virtue of the fact that we apprehend the representation of things that affect us, i.e., those of outer things.” Note how the possibility of self-affection corresponds to sentience generally while the process of apprehending representations explains its possibility.

<sup>19</sup> Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*, section 505. Compare *Leningrad Fragment*, II.4: “I am immediately and originally conscious of myself as an entity in the world [*Weltwesen*].” For Kant, “soul” is an ambiguous term that generally indicates the object of inner sense and broadly connotes connection with body but strictly (in rational psychology) is free of that connection and, hypostatized thus, is “*der Geist*.” (See, in general, the Pölitz and Mrongovius Psychology lecture transcripts.) A “purely psychological” concept of apperception would name the disembodied intellect, which lacks any determinate relation to outer objects, hence, for Kant, lacks temporal determinacy. Hegel’s account of subjective mind *is* about subjectivity developing through natural existence, and it starts with the *soul* as the progress from “natural soul” or “world-soul” to an actual soul apprehending its embodied sentience in conscious subjectivity, or in other words, a progress from substance to subject (Enz sections 389, 391). For Kant, “*Geist*” simply connotes abstraction from the intellect’s bodily bounds, but this *abstraction* invites Hegelian scrutiny.

<sup>20</sup> Kant’s attempt to present his doctrine of apperception via the pithy Cartesian expression “I think” tempts intellectualizing readings in at least two ways: (1) It takes us directly *from* a Cartesian mental

is crucial for seeing the motives for Kant's *doctrine of the threefold synthesis* in the complex of ideas present in the *doctrine of self-affection*.

To begin with, Baumgarten specifies various faculties in the soul. He derives them from the soul's basic concept as a representative power by differentiating between obscure or clear representations that mark off sensible from intellectual faculties. Within the sensible faculty, he further differentiates between representations of present, past, or future states, respectively marking off faculties of sense, imagination, and foresight. He does not comment on the inner connection between clarity and temporal ordering of states, leaving it implicit in the notion of consciousness as an inner temporalized awareness ranged from obscurity to clarity.<sup>21</sup> The sub-faculties of sensibility possess their range of clarity and obscurity in themselves, but these variations are just passively present, even if the possibility of the intellect rests on the possibility of clarification through *attention* and *abstraction*. Only when a certain conception of *spontaneity* is subsequently made into a principle for organizing the discoveries of empirical psychology along rational psychological lines do we acquire a proper account of the soul as the relation of active mind to passive body.<sup>22</sup>

substance conscious of all its contents to a Kantian analogue without rational psychological substantialist commitments, missing methodological nuances leading us from the empirical quality of the Cartesian "I think" to the pure ego function, which compete with strategies in Wolff and Baumgarten to extract rational psychology from empirical psychology. (2) It colors Kantian apperception with a dialectic of universal form and singular instantiation (after a Cartesian cogito that discloses essence through existence), whereas a Wolffian reading would stress the role of "total perception" (expressing possible experience) for disclosing the principle of apperception, whose originality Kant grounds on the consciousness of *intuition* preceding all thought, thus grounding apperception in a reflective-receptive form of consciousness, not a totalizing of subjective identity.

<sup>21</sup> Sections 504, 510, 535. The connection between clarity and temporal ordering was stressed by Wolff (*Vernünfftige Gedancken* sections 728–36; partial translation in Watkins 2009: 46–7), who took clarity to arise upon distinguishing one thing from another, even in the most elementary instance of being conscious of something. Making distinctions requires *reflection* as an act that can hold together distinguished representations and *memory* as an act that preserves the identity of a representation with itself in order to sustain comparison with others. Now, thoughts are taken by Wolff to be alterations in the soul, and, since alterations take time, thoughts are understood to take time. This lets him explain how consciousness accompanies thinking by taking any case of thinking as a process sustained through acts of reflection and memory.

<sup>22</sup> Dyck, 2016, notes and explains Baumgarten's scruples about ascribing spontaneity to the intellect or the will, shows how Kant's conception of the spontaneous intellect is indebted to Crusius and Tetens, and identifies Tetens as one of Kant's sources for the doctrine of threefold synthesis. Thiel, 1996, notes the indirect importance of Tetens, and Thiel, 2001, provides some empirical psychological background. In his well-known Heidegger-critique, Henrich (1994: 25, 28, 223n64) dismisses the influence of Tetens and warns against reading deeply into Kant's talk of mental faculties, spontaneity, etc., which are manifestly loose remarks in contrast to the diligent delineation of objective principles. For ways of still reading deeply into such remarks, see Grüne 2013.

For Kant, the question of activity and passivity or of sense and understanding does not concern the aesthetic or logical qualities of representations such as clarity or distinctness, but the relation of mind to an object. If the object is given, we talk about receptivity, but if not, we may talk about spontaneity; and, since Kant holds a pure form of receptivity, this complicates easy distribution of activity and passivity along mind-body divisions or the soul's parts. We no longer understand consciousness through its distinguishing activity or by its having degrees of clarity or by its being an inner sense. Rather, a pure self-consciousness recovered from its usual reduction to inner sense by psychologists, Kant says, constitutes the possibility of the understanding.<sup>23</sup> Self-affection, however, denotes the larger possibility of a receptive mind as such, of the receptive and reflective features in the domains of sense and imagination at both pure and empirical levels, involved in the production of pure intuitions as well as ordinary empirical acts of attention.<sup>24</sup> It replaces the A-Deduction's extensive discussion of the synthetic work of sense and imagination, but it does not replace the model of mind underlying that discussion.

The views of the eminent psychologists contextualize Kant's own. Those views turned around questions of activity and passivity, and therewith, the mind-body relation. Kant reviews the former questions, when he rethinks the principles of cognition, but, also, in a less evident way, the mind-body relation, when he explores the notion of receptive mind or "transcendental embodiment."<sup>25</sup> From this context, we also see the elements of Kant's threefold synthesis, which describes the *apprehension* of a sensible manifold (articulating its manifold according to the form of temporal succession), imaginative *reproduction* (recollecting passing elements while advancing), *recognitive* consciousness (asserting the identity of recollected elements that now have the explicit form of universality present implicitly in imaginative reproduction of contents), and ultimately a pure self-consciousness or identity.<sup>26</sup>

Kant not only rejects a hypostatization of the ego as simple substance in his critique of rational psychology, but also a science of the mind conceived as refinement of empirical psychology leading to rational

<sup>23</sup> See B134n, B153.      <sup>24</sup> B156–7n.

<sup>25</sup> I borrow the term from Nuzzo, 2008, who uses it to think about the "complex crossing – this chiasm, as it were – between reason and sensibility" but also to remind us that the question of the embodied subject is the question of Kant's alternative to the metaphysics of physical influx (223 & 369n.84).

<sup>26</sup> A98–A110.

psychology.<sup>27</sup> Yet, worries about Kant's transcendental logic taking pure logic into psychological territory remain and are only magnified when we consider his repurposing of themes taken from Wolff-Baumgarten's psychology. For, Kant appeals to psychology not just for benign illustrations, nor even quasi-critical purposes such as "transcendental reflection," which acknowledges how reflection permeates all theoretical activity; how it enables awareness of the quality of intentional states;<sup>28</sup> and how it corrects concepts of things on this basis. Rather, Kant also executes key meta-theoretical designs by means of self-affection, reflection, and the imagination as effecting particular kinds of mediation between understanding and sensibility available to a non-intuiting intellect. This is because he believes that an explication of subjective grounds alone proves truly first principles.

Thus, the first principles of *a priori* cognition lose the "proud name of an ontology, which . . . must give way to the modest one of an analytic of the understanding."<sup>29</sup> The analytic of the understanding itself, however, ventures into a *doctrine of the power of judgment*, whose transcendental part considers the imagination as a determination of sensibility in order to study its contents as the applications of pure concepts to appearances. This, in turn, is grounded on the doctrine of self-affection. To now ask for a justification of this doctrine is to ask about Kant's theory of mind itself. The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* does precisely this, whereas Kant was not in a position to investigate the problems of logical subordination as such *in union with* problems of the synthesis of perceptions when he introduced the transcendental functions of the imagination as a stopgap statement of this problem in the first *Critique*. At that point it sufficed to expound the intellect under the conditions of possible experience, whether this was done through the doctrine of threefold synthesis (which discovers the emergence of the unity of consciousness through structures of reception and reflection) or through the doctrine of self-affection (which considers the *a priori* determination of sensibility through given contents). The turn to practical reason opened up the question of its unity with theoretical reason, and made it urgent<sup>30</sup> to inquire into the power of judgment as an intermediary between different transcendental capacities

<sup>27</sup> Ak.4:471. <sup>28</sup> On this aspect, see Pippin 1987. <sup>29</sup> A247/B304.

<sup>30</sup> See Kant's early suspicions about this in the *Groundwork*, Ak.4:391, 427. He recognizes here the need for a far-reaching inquiry into the unity of reason, in lieu of which he can only offer a "groundwork" for a metaphysics of morals. The former would have to separate anthropology and empirical psychology from a metaphysical analysis of the will, which requires a critical treatment of the possibility of such a metaphysics and a common principle for theoretical and practical reason.

of mind and the imagination as a hub of transactions within the subject as a system of faculties.

We cannot rehearse here the complex path from the concept of reflection in the first *Critique* to its expansion in the third,<sup>31</sup> which now looks to complete the critical system by examining “the system of all faculties of the human mind [*Gemüt*].”<sup>32</sup> Integrating the mind under a transcendental-philosophical light involves elucidating the subjective principle of the power of judgment in general, and this involves justifying a common sense. The latter names a shared subjectivity, which is expressed in different ways, a feeling accompanying the activity of the imagination and the schematizing relations of the imagination and the understanding, sometimes called the “feeling of life” (*Lebensgefühl*) by Kant, as well as the communicability of representation and communal normativity at large. It is, at any rate, not to be assumed by “appeal to psychological observations” and, in fact, its role in aesthetic judgments of reflection would “elevate them out of empirical psychology and . . . transpose them into transcendental philosophy.”<sup>33</sup> We can leave behind the intricate development of these points in Kantian thought in order to see how Hegel sets up his theory of the imagination in his own philosophy of mind, integrating the realms of feeling and consciousness through his own response to empirical and rational psychology.

### 3. Hegel's Imagination as Making Sense (of the Kantian Mind)

Hegel's Kant-critique is wide-ranging and varied, to say the least. It is possible, however, to pick out his specific concern in regard to the present point about re-designing the study of mind. Hegel holds Kant to have correctly delinked *the a priori* synthetic unity (of apperception) from the empirical subject, which allows Hegel to understand the former as an expression of the true unity of reason in various ways.<sup>34</sup> Kant himself

<sup>31</sup> The First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (15; Ak.20:211) extends the Wolffian concept of reflection (invoked in the third chapter of the doctrine of the power of judgment in the first *Critique*) both to being an animal condition and to underwriting reflecting judgment.

<sup>32</sup> CJ, 11; Ak.20:205 and Preface, CJ, 55–8; Ak.5:167–70. <sup>33</sup> CJ, 123 & 149; Ak.5:239 & 266.

<sup>34</sup> In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel identifies the productive imagination in the Transcendental Deduction as the locus of this unity, which Kant mislaid by “set[ting it] forth in a rather mixed-up way . . . almost in the ordinary form of a psychological faculty” (73; TWA 2: 308–9) and, accordingly, Kant's account merely constituted a stage in “the completion and idealization of this [Lockean] empirical psychology” (63; TWA 2: 297). Although there is no mention of productive

failed to understand this, for he did not sufficiently articulate an account of the subject that supports that true unity, and he had to rest with asserting the simplicity of the representation "I" or the conglomeration of subjective faculties. Without an account of the mind that develops its concept concretely, the former lapses into a formal identity and the latter disintegrates into a plurality of faculties, whose interaction, when it does not regurgitate the old idea of perfection in classical pneumatology,<sup>35</sup> only mimics the naturalizing scientific form of the play of forces in lieu of a dialectical explication of the truly concrete activity of self-relation.<sup>36</sup> The latter explication would properly address the integrative activity of mind by showing a necessity in the connection of the faculties themselves, which Hegel's Psychology seeks to outline.

Hegel's account of the imagination is located in the third part of his account of "Subjective mind," which, under the title "Psychology," follows the first two parts "Anthropology" and "Phenomenology," and leads into his account of "Objective mind." Anthropology studies *soul* and Phenomenology studies *consciousness*. What Psychology studies is a little harder to state,<sup>37</sup> but precisely this will be examined subsequently in conjunction

imagination (while only a passing mention of "free imagination") in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, the Kant-critique there (sections 40–60, but esp. sections 55–6; also see section 415R) shares with the one in *Faith and Knowledge* the view that Kant had barely glimpsed the nature of this unity in aspects of reflective judgment analyzed in the *3rd Critique*. *Faith and Knowledge* specifies that the latter analysis failed to apprehend true rational unity because Kant only connected the idea of beauty with the "harmonious play of its [i.e., of the cognitive faculty] various powers" and grounded the idea of life on views rooted in "experience and empirical psychology." (88–9; TWA 2: 324–6). The harmony of faculties and the syntheses of the imagination return into focus in Hegel's Psychology.

<sup>35</sup> Enz section 378Z.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., and section 442R, section 445R2–3, section 451Z, and 1817 *Mind* section 367R. In 1817, Hegel credits Jacobi's critique of Kant's "abstractions" – space, time, consciousness (as pure "I" and the copula in judgment) with having almost arrived at this insight: "Now the concrete [rational unity, a priori synthetic unity] in its various forms as imagination, judging, and the apperception of self-consciousness is also treated of *in its relation to those abstractions*. Since those abstractions have been fixated as independent entities, the result is that both those abstractions and the forms of the concrete are maintained in their abstract difference and form a fixed substrate [*bestehende Grundlage*] for each other instead of sublating themselves dialectically. Thus reason comes to rest upon the understanding, the understanding upon the imagination, imagination upon sensibility, and sensibility itself in turn upon imagination. – It is, however, arguable that Kant's own conception of the relation in which those powers [*Kräfte*] stand to each other is more exactly expressed in terms of conditioning and being conditioned by each other." ("Jacobi Review," 15–16; TWA 3:442).

<sup>37</sup> The headings and correlated sub-headings "Anthropology – Soul," "Phenomenology – Consciousness," and "Psychology – Mind" were given by Hegel in the 1827 edition of the *Encyclopaedia*, but were implicit in the 1817 edition (section 307). They clearly signal the importance of Psychology for a philosophy of *mind*, but it also becomes difficult to specify what is indicated by the bare term "mind" in that part of a philosophy of *mind*, which studies the progress

with Hegel's critique of the older disciplines of empirical and rational psychology as well as of Kant's account of mind. (I do not consider Objective mind here.) Psychology itself has three parts, which respectively cover theoretical, practical, and free mind. The account of imagination belongs to the first part, theoretical mind, and leads us from the stage of intuition to that of thinking. The transition between intuitions and thoughts is handled under the concept of representation, and here the faculty of imagination mediates between (relatively passive) recollection and (relatively active) memory to receive and transform given contents of mind into freely produced forms.<sup>38</sup> As such, Hegel's imagination takes up matters corresponding to Kant's imagination as synthesizing representations and calling up objects.

This topic, however, flows into larger concerns about how to study the mind at all. For, the theory of mind taken up in Hegel's Psychology is deeply related to the Anthropology and the Phenomenology, not only because the topics appear in a dialectical sequence, but also because the specific nature of this progression in the sphere of mind as a self-forming, self-manifesting relation to externality involves an internalization of content. This has to do with how Hegel conceives of the different characters attributed to the different determinations in his philosophical system. Thus, determinations in the sphere of nature are held to subsist as external to each other, whereas determinations in the sphere of mind overcome this externality. Accordingly, the basic mode of being for mind is not as an indifferent thing lying external to other things. Rather, mind *is* as an inwardization or return from externality.<sup>39</sup> The inward turn does not simply abstract from externality. It is better understood as the development of a self-relation through the determinations of mind.

In a note he adds to section 387R of the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel stresses the character of progress in these determinations, which makes explicit what is implicit, so that the determinations are absorbed into concrete acts of cognition. In the 1827 version of this same remark, Hegel explains that ordinary psychology studies the determinations of

of subjective *mind*. In Hegelian terms, one can say: in Psychology, subjective mind, which is the concept of mind, is fully developed. I will put this more generally by situating Hegel's conception amidst Kant's negotiations with empirical and rational psychology.

<sup>38</sup> Hegel understands "mind" as essentially free: "Das Wesen des Geistes ist deswegen formell die Freiheit" (Enz section 382). This freedom includes acts of creative imagination (*Phantasie*) as the mind progresses from given sensible content toward a certain *ownership* of representations and a certain capacity for *producing* signs. These aspects of mind are important for his philosophy of art.

<sup>39</sup> Enz section 381Z.



mind as properties or *expressions* of an already constituted subject, from which it infers to various forces or faculties *in it*, which purportedly tell us what the mind is *as such*. For Hegel, rather, the determinations of mind, as implicated in a self-relating, cognitive process, are moments of its self-manifestation.<sup>40</sup> We could say that mind is an activity so long as we avoid the one-sided designation “activity” thought in isolation from “passivity.” So, we should characterize the self-forming nature of mind as a *Bildung*<sup>41</sup> through acts of reception, such that earlier phases anticipate later ones and later ones are mirrored in earlier phases.<sup>42</sup> I will first consider how this conception of mind bears on the question of the study of mind, and then consider how the mind as constituted through *Bildung* relates to mind in the form of *Einbildung* (imagination).

Both Kant and Hegel are critical of Wolff's and Baumgarten's studies of the soul. In these, one first assembles observations about the soul under the heading “empirical psychology” and then constructs a “rational psychology” by arguing systematically from grounds to consequences, from the essence of the soul to its other determinations. Kant's model of mind challenged this picture, first, by proposing a pure concept of self-consciousness emphatically distinguished from empirical psychology's reduction of self-consciousness to inner sense, and, second, by showing that any “putative science,” which would be built upon the bare “I think” as “the sole text of rational psychology,”<sup>43</sup> rested on an erroneous hypo-statization of pure self-consciousness. Yet, Kant's model was woven centrally around doctrines of self-affection and threefold syntheses and remained contextualized by the older picture.

Hegel too rejects the older picture, but his approach is slightly different. For him, the speculative study of mind avoids both empirical psychology's dismemberment of the living unity of its development through haphazard observations about the mind as a thing with powers subject to circumstance as well as rational psychology's unifications of the manifold of observations into a dead essence.<sup>44</sup> Yet, beyond empirical and rational psychology, which study mind wrongly as a thing through perception or through thought,<sup>45</sup> Hegel also speaks of *three* wrong ways of studying the mind:<sup>46</sup> (1) aggregating introspective observations,<sup>47</sup> (2) a more scientific

<sup>40</sup> Enz section 383. <sup>41</sup> Enz section 387R. <sup>42</sup> Enz section 380. <sup>43</sup> A342–3/B400–1.

<sup>44</sup> Enz section 378. <sup>45</sup> Enz section 379Z; cf. section 34Z. <sup>46</sup> Enz section 378&Z.

<sup>47</sup> In his 1817 “Jacobi Review,” p.17, Hegel calls this “anthropology” per custom; cf. section 444R, which also dates from 1817. Hegel does not distinguish very clearly between this type of psychology and the second type, presumably because of the historical variety of these types he must have encountered.



analysis of the mind's various powers and effects ("empirical psychology"), and (3) an abstract metaphysics of the mind ("rational psychology"). Hegel's comments here indicate that he takes Kant to have rejected the first and the last but advanced the second on a more philosophical plane. How Kant advanced empirical psychology and, yet, remained within its sphere, constitutes the nub of his critique of Kant's as well as the older study of mind.

Hegel's Psychology studies Subjective mind as it reflects on its prior progress through (1) the stages of *soul-theory*, going from the inchoate universality of the world-soul to the proto-consciousness embodied in the actual feeling soul<sup>48</sup> and (2) the stages of *consciousness*, going from sensory perception, the understanding, and the struggles of self-consciousness to the unification of consciousness and self-consciousness in reason.<sup>49</sup> Theoretical mind starts here, that is, as Subjective mind, which is cognitive in shape (as consciousness) and has itself for content (as self-consciousness).<sup>50</sup> The crux of its cognitive self-apprehension is the imagination mediating sensible content and conceptual form *by means of* reproducing and producing representations that answer to contents internalized in the preceding stages.<sup>51</sup> Hegel reworks the Kantian account of threefold synthesis at precisely this juncture, hence recalling the picture of mind at play in the A-Deduction. Because he emphasizes not just the synthetic capacities of mind, but also the syntheses of the capacities themselves, it also recalls the larger picture of mind as a receptive and reflective complex signaled by the concept of self-affection in the B-Deduction. Thus, we can reconstruct Hegel's account as responsive to the difference between the two deductions encapsulated in the doctrines of threefold synthesis and self-affection.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Enz sections 388–412.      <sup>49</sup> Enz sections 413–39.

<sup>50</sup> Enz sections 440, 443–5. Before reaching the stage of Objective mind, "theoretical mind" traverses "practical mind" and its unity with the latter, which I am not considering here.

<sup>51</sup> Enz section 440R.

<sup>52</sup> I am grateful to Kenneth Westphal for pointing out that Hegel mostly relied on the B-edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, but *could* have consulted the A-edition, and *would* have been able to reconstruct the doctrine of synthesis from certain other sources anyway. Corey Dyck's investigations cited previously revealed one possible source in Tetens, a copy of whose *Versuche* Hegel owned. Jeffrey Reid, 2013, shows the rich engagement with empirical psychology informing the details of Hegel's theory of subjective mind and he carefully identifies Hegel's historical sources, including (here citing di Giovanni) his teachers at Tübingen conveying Kantian strains of empirical psychology. The A-edition had become scarce over time, as Jacobi records in his much-cited 1815 Supplement on Transcendental Idealism, and thus difficult for Hegel to procure. (My thanks to George di Giovanni for alerting me to this passage.) In that very passage Jacobi stresses the need to diligently compare the earlier and later editions and flags the A-Deduction in particular as one such place. Hegel's "Jacobi Review" (p. 4) indicates that he read this passage.

In the sections covering the journey of representation from its sensible beginnings in feeling and intuition to its culmination in thoughts, Hegel tracks: (1) the refinement of proto-reflective shapes of mind toward self-consciousness; (2) the generation of various mental elements assumed in Kant's explanations, such as the formal and material aspects of intuition, feelings and internalized images, and acts of attention and retention; (3) the integration of mind through the cooperation of faculties taken not as pieces of a thinking substance but as the self-relating acts of rationality itself, whereby these cohere in the concrete production of a world of meaning, a sense-making that shows up as much in the realms of art and semiotics as it does in basic psychological processes of associating contents and assembling images through habit.

The 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* already spoke about how reflection implicit in objective claims of knowledge presses ahead to self-consciousness proper. The philosophy of subjective mind expands this to address the pre-reflective structures constituting the soul as an embodied mind, which condition the cognitive positions of consciousness and their psychological unity. The Anthropological category of self-feeling (*Selbstgefühl*) is a turning point in *this* story. Hegel revised these sections extensively to stress the role played by the category of feeling in all parts of Subjective mind and to illustrate the various modes of idealization within sensation (*Empfindung*). In themselves, the contents received in sensation merely register the relation of sentience to an environment. In accordance with the logical category of *Dasein*, they develop differentiations of outer and inner sensing, which are particularized through corporeality and unified in self-feeling.<sup>53</sup> Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that the reflective charges intricately woven into numerous receptive shapes at this point anticipate higher articulations through consciousness and apprehensions through self-consciousness.

Thus, distinctions between the form and matter of sensation, subjective determinations such as a sensible and bodily point of view on the world, or theories about the internalization of outer sense only become meaningful at the higher stages. In this way, claims about the formal intuitions of space and time and the subjectivity underlying cosmological apperception or reproductive and productive syntheses can be thought of as mediations of sensible content with the unity of consciousness. Without this, we would only be giving names such as "self-affection" and "schematism" as attempts to weld back what was assumed as separated, as Kant recognized in his effort to integrate the faculties and systematize the subject of critique.

<sup>53</sup> Enz sections 399–408.

For Hegel, this creates explanatory gaps between reception and reflection, and we would be hard-pressed to see just how they fit together.<sup>54</sup> On Hegel's view, an account of mind integrating its contents and actions should fill such gaps to show how the subjective form of appearance stems from embodied reflection and underlies the unity of self-consciousness with empirical consciousness. It shows how, in the act of attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*),<sup>55</sup> this unity enables the synthetic unity of apperception to relate to a totality of content so that subjective forms of appearance receive objective forms of externality as such. Finally, it shows how, through attention, the relation of contingent particularity and ideal universality is crafted in synthetic acts of recollection and imagination. These acts now express the implicit relations of sentient contents to each other in explicit and free acts of association and abstraction.

In Hegel's account, the imagination plays with individual images or representations that are distinctly mine, and in doing so unites in a concrete shape the internal and external components of mental content. The universal elements of self-consciousness and the particular elements of consciousness, both present in the unity of an intuition, are "synthesized" by the mind at this stage.<sup>56</sup> This is, in essence, a synthesis of the faculties since Hegel considers "faculty" a provisional term looking to the proper actuality of mind that transcends its limited cognitive shape to integrate mind into a self-affective totality through its part-acts. In Kant, some of this work was done by the *sensus communis* presupposed for a necessary satisfaction of consciousness as a feeling in regard to a given intuition. In reproducing intuition, on Hegel's account, the imagination produces signs,<sup>57</sup> the mind speaks and symbolic imagination makes sense in artistic practices,<sup>58</sup> and begins the work of joining subjective mind with objectivity at large and, ultimately, taking up the work of freedom.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, despite surface differences between Kantian and Hegelian accounts of the imagination and their critiques of existing psychology, we see shared modeling of mind as integrating reception and reflection. But, a worry

<sup>54</sup> For instance, without a detailed account of the several structures of reception and reflection in feeling, which Hegel tries to provide, it becomes at least hard to see just how Kant (in the *Metaphysical Exposition* of space) connects the *a priori* formality of intuition with the conditions of being outside an embodied consciousness and the rational conditions of mathematical thought, and how he joins (in the doctrine of threefold synthesis) these disparate conditions in the synthetic acts of the imagination, which combines representations "as such" in inner sense.

<sup>55</sup> Enz sections 446–50.

<sup>56</sup> Hegel takes care to insert this Kantian word in the 1830 additions to Enz sections 451, 454, 456, and 457.

<sup>57</sup> Enz section 457. <sup>58</sup> Enz sections 456R, 457R, 459&R. <sup>59</sup> Enz sections 464–9.

remains: can we imagine *Kant* accepting the Hegelian synthesis? I think this is possible if we relaxed strongly intellectualizing readings of the Kantian mind by unpacking its self-affective dimensions and enriching his bare concept of inner sense to accommodate layers of nested temporalized objects. This would immerse the subject in a field of enmeshed memories and anticipations, from which reflection on pure forms would arise, letting further lines of confluent thought between Kant and Hegel emerge.

*The Ground of Hegel's Logic of Life  
and the Unity of Reason  
The Free Lawfulness of the Imagination*  
Gerad Gentry

Hegel's magnum opus, *The Science of Logic*, and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* are the critical core of his absolute idealism. They serve as the source of validity for the structure, method, and necessity of the entire system of absolute idealism. The *Logic*, which begins this tripartite core, concerns the abstract rules of thought: its categories, movements, and principles. It is within this context that we find Hegel's chapter on Teleology. Uniquely, this chapter is the locale of the final transition of the "Doctrine of the Concept" by which he establishes the "idea," the highest shape of which is the "absolute idea." The absolute idea is, in turn, simultaneously the completion of the *Logic* and the grounding of *the Philosophy of Nature* within his tripartite encyclopedic system. It is in this chapter on Teleology, the final transition of the *Logic*, that Hegel claims Kant gave to philosophy the concept of inner purposiveness.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I aim to cast doubt on standard readings of Hegel's logic of purposiveness and thereby the standard accounts of the *Logic's* "idea" or principle of "life."<sup>2</sup> I begin, in Section 1, by drawing attention to what Hegel calls "one of Kant's greatest services to philosophy."<sup>3</sup> In Section 2, I then identify concerns with interpretations such as those given by James Kreines and Robert Pippin, which I take to exemplify a problematic norm of interpolating Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* into the *Logic*. These

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Paul Franks, Megan Gentry, Keren Gorodeisky, George Khushf, Anne Pollok, and Konstantin Pollok for feedback on all or portions of this chapter; thanks to Fredrick Neuhouser and Karen Ng for their feedback at the Georgetown German Idealism and Naturalism Conference, and Johannes Haag and Tobias Rosefeldt for their feedback in and out of seminars in Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> This ranges from Robert Pippin's Kantian and "non-metaphysical" reading to Steven Houlgate's metaphysical reading, as well as post-Kantian, Aristotelian accounts of Hegel's teleology such as those given by Robert Stern and James Kreines.

<sup>3</sup> *WL* 12.157.

reflections on interpretive norms lead us to a re-evaluation of Hegel's text, starting, in Section 3, with the chapter on Mechanism in the *Logic*. In Section 4, I proceed to Hegel's chapter on Teleology, where I suggest that Hegel's notion of purposiveness in the *Science of Logic* cannot be understood to pertain to a real, inner purposiveness such as Aristotelian conception of the soul in *De Anima* or the Kantian idea of a teleological "natural end" as is commonly held. Instead, I argue, it is a direct inheritance of Kant's *a priori* principle of purposiveness, which is best understood as the "free lawfulness of the imagination." In Section 5, I respond to a likely worry.

### 1. Kant's Greatest Service to Philosophy according to Hegel

In his 1802 critique of Kant in *Glauben und Wissen* (GW), Hegel gives voice to the same critique of Kant that will later play the culminating role in the final transition of the 1816/17 *Logic* and *Encyclopedia*.<sup>4</sup> Namely, Hegel takes special note not of the synthetic unity of apperception, but of Kant's conception of the imagination, which Hegel calls (a) the "germ of speculation" and (b) Kant's "greatest service to philosophy."

Of (a), Hegel says: "we must not place Kant's merit in this, that he puts the forms, as expressed in the categories, into the human cognitive faculty . . . We must find it, rather in his having put the Idea of authentic *a priori* in the form of transcendental imagination,"<sup>5</sup> and further that the "germ of speculation lies in this triplicity alone. For the root judgment, or duality,<sup>6</sup> is in it as well, and hence the very possibility of *a posteriori*."<sup>7</sup> Hegel's view here is that Kant's transcendental imagination in the *KrV* represents the "germ of speculation" because it contains within it the very duality of the *a priori* and *a posteriori* and, thereby, the possibility of their critical unity in speculative thought.<sup>8</sup> Put differently, a "truer" articulation of the synthetic unity of apperception might require a careful account of the centrality of the source of "Kant's merit." This merit in the *KrV*, this "germ of speculation," is the "triplicity" of the imagination. I suggest that we understand Hegel's reference to triplicity of the imagination as precisely the threefold synthesis of the imagination that I sketched in Section 2 of the introduction to this volume. It is worth recalling that Kant identifies

<sup>4</sup> And he maintains it in the revised versions. <sup>5</sup> GW, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this duality in Kant's Productive Imagination, see Zambrana 2015, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> GW, p. 80. <sup>8</sup> GW, p. 73.

this threefold synthesis at times as the “empirical synthesis,” the “figurative synthesis,” and “intellectual synthesis.” Further, “synthesis in general” includes all forms of synthesis and, Kant argues, “synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination.”<sup>9</sup>

We have textual evidence in the B-deduction to think that Kant retained the view he had explicitly held in the A-deduction. Namely, “intellectual synthesis”<sup>10</sup> is that whereby pure representations are given (including the pure concepts of the understanding).<sup>11</sup> Kant argues that the *categories*, as pure concepts of the understanding, *cannot* “arise analytically as far as the content is concerned.”<sup>12</sup> Rather, the representations of the pure concepts of the understanding arise synthetically through pure or “intellectual” synthesis. So, Kant states, “pure synthesis, generally represented, yields the pure concepts of the understanding.”<sup>13</sup> And synthesis in general, as we saw in the introduction, is the “mere effect of the imagination.”<sup>14</sup> To this end, the B-deduction seems to confirm what he explicitly states in the A-deduction, namely, “the unity of apperception in relation to the synthesis of the imagination is the understanding, and this very same unity in relation to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is the **pure understanding**.”<sup>15</sup> The other two kinds of synthesis will yield “mediating representations” and sensible representations or “intuitions.” For the other two kinds of synthesis, I refer my reader to Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the introduction. This picture of a threefold synthesis of the imagination means that it is a productive power of synthesis on both sides of the divide (pure understanding on the one hand and sensibility on the other) as well as the mediating representation between both.

The question of whether such “triplicity” of the imagination is the best reading of Kant is not relevant. What is relevant is that it is *a defensible reading* based on both the A and B-deductions of the *KrV* and it is *Hegel’s reading of Kant*. This interpretation of Kant leads Hegel to view Kant’s conception of the transcendental imagination in the *KrV* as the “germ of speculation.” And the transcendental imagination is the seed of speculative

<sup>9</sup> A77–8/B103–4; for an excellent handling of the imagination as the source of synthesis in Kant as well as some of these passages from Hegel, see Longuenesse 2000, esp. pp. 272–3; cf. 1998, pp. 12, 61–3, and 2003.

<sup>10</sup> “*synthesis intellectualis*,” B151.

<sup>11</sup> A77–8/B103–4. This is not a standard reading of “intellectual synthesis”; unfortunately, I do not have space to defend that this is the best reading of Kant.

<sup>12</sup> A77–8/B103–4. <sup>13</sup> A78/B104. <sup>14</sup> A77–8/B103–4, *my emphasis*.

<sup>15</sup> A119: “Die Einheit der Apperzeption in Beziehung auf ... die transcendente Synthesis der Einbildungskraft ist ... der reine Verstand.”

thought for Hegel, because (*he thinks*) it somehow contains within itself the “duality” of necessity and contingency, the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*;<sup>16</sup> thereby, internal to the productive imagination is the possibility of a bridge, a unity, and of “absolute knowledge.”<sup>17</sup> According to Hegel, this unity of the *a priori* and a *a posteriori* is possible precisely because the duality is internal to the concept: internal to the imagination.<sup>18</sup>

I suggest that this source or “germ of speculation” is what Hegel will later refer to as the “imperfect, ambiguous, and only negative” success of the first *Critique*.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, speaking of the third *Critique*, Hegel argues that Kant “positively” raises philosophy to the threshold of absolute idealism. If this is right, then the essence of what Hegel has in mind in this early writing (from *GW*) is only fully and systematically worked out later in *The Science of Logic* (WL) and *Encyclopedic* system. Indeed, as referenced previously, early in his chapter on Teleology in the *Logic*, Hegel introduces purposiveness with this striking declaration:

One of Kant's greatest services to philosophy was in drawing the distinction between relative or *external* purposiveness and *internal* purposiveness [*äußerer und innerer Zweckmäßigkeit*]; in the latter he opened up [*aufgeschlossen*] the concept of *life*, the *idea* [*den Begriff des Lebens, die Idee*], and with that he positively raised [*erhoben*] philosophy above the determinations of reflection and the relative world of metaphysics, something the *Critique of Reason* does only imperfectly, ambiguously, and only *negatively*.<sup>20</sup>

Fundamentally, my argument concerns how we should interpret that passage and the idea it introduces.

In the next section, I will consider standard readings of this chapter on Teleology, which take Hegel's notion of “*innerer Zweckmäßigkeit*” to hold systematic parity with Kant's notion of a *Naturzweck* or with Aristotle's principle of the soul (in *De Anima*). I will suggest that both kinds of interpolations are untenable and that what Hegel has in mind here is a notion of *innerer Zweckmäßigkeit* that is systematically comparable

<sup>16</sup> One difference between Kant and Hegel is that the *a posteriori*, for Hegel, represents not merely the empirical, but the contingency of manifest reality – the historical. It is an important part of the absolute wherein contingency in life is constitutive of absolute “necessity.”

<sup>17</sup> I suggest, though I do not have space to defend this, that “absolute knowledge” should be understood to differ from cognition, aesthetic ideas, and pure practical ideals not in kind, but in the type of unity internal to the synthetic necessity it represents. That is, absolute knowledge is like Kant's synthetic *a priori* cognitions, ideas, etc., but grounded on judgments in which the unity between the *a priori* and a *a posteriori* has been proven to be internal to the judgment itself. Such a proof depends on the very transition in the *Logic* that I am here discussing.

<sup>18</sup> For more on Hegel's notion of a true unity as “internal,” see the final two paragraphs of this section.

<sup>19</sup> WL 12.157. <sup>20</sup> Ibid.



(holds parity with) Kant's *a priori* principle, the "free lawfulness of the Imagination."<sup>21</sup>

Before turning to standard interpolations, we should recall some passages that might lead to a recognition of "innerer Zweckmäßigkeit" as an appropriation of Kant's *a priori* principle of purposiveness. In the penultimate chapter of the *Logic* where Hegel provides his exposition of the second stage of the Idea from "life" to the "true" in "cognition,"<sup>22</sup> Hegel says, "Kant made the profound observation that there are *synthetic* principles *a priori*."<sup>23</sup> What is more, Kant "recognized as their root the unity of self-consciousness, hence the self-identity of the concept."<sup>24</sup> That is, Kant recognized that these transcendental principles are the fundamental *principles* of a unified *pure reason in general*.<sup>25</sup>

The problem, according to Hegel, is that Kant does not demonstrate the necessity of these *a priori* principles. Rather, he merely assumed their necessary status as requisite explanatory grounds of the *possibility* for synthetic *a priori* judgments (theoretical, practical, and aesthetic). To this end, Hegel continues:

However, [Kant] takes the *specific* connection, the relational concepts and the synthetic principles, *from formal logic as given*; the deduction of these should have been the exposition of the transition of that simple unity of self-consciousness into these determinations and distinctions; but Kant spared himself the effort of demonstrating this truly synthetic progression, that of self-producing concept.<sup>26</sup>

It is this "truly synthetic progression" or "self-producing concept" that is the necessity of speculative thought in Hegel's *Logic*.

I suggest that the "transcendental imagination" in the *KrV* contained the "germ of speculation" because it possessed the "duality" of the "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" not as external, but as "internal"<sup>27</sup> and so also the possibility of demonstrating "truly synthetic progression." What's more,

<sup>21</sup> *KU* 5:240–1.

<sup>22</sup> Idea of Life: *WL* 12.179; Idea of Cognition: *WL* 12.192; and the unity of the two in self-recognition becomes the Absolute Idea: *WL* 12.236.

<sup>23</sup> *WL* 12.205; these are the principles whereby a given judgment form lays claim to a *a priori* synthetic validity. That is, without such principles, no transcendental deductions are possible. Accordingly, the three *Critiques* have three *a priori* principles: (1) the Synthetic Unity of Apperception, (2) the Moral Law, (3) Purposiveness; or, as Kant identifies them in the second introduction to the *KU*, (1) Lawfulness, (2) Final End, (3) Purposiveness (*KU* 5:198).

<sup>24</sup> *WL* 12.205.

<sup>25</sup> That is, though they form a unity *qua* reason in general, Kant never demonstrates that unity; it stands only as a regulative presupposition.

<sup>26</sup> *WL* 12.205. <sup>27</sup> *GW*, p. 80.

Hegel thinks that the *KU* succeeds in “raising philosophy” to the “true” (i.e., speculative) “idea” through the “concept of life.”<sup>28</sup> Hegel’s attribution of this success to the third *Critique* is all the more interesting given his claim that it was “only negatively” achieved<sup>29</sup> in the *KrV*. In other words, what was only negatively achieved in the first *Critique* is “positively” achieved in the third. Here, we have the first clue that “innerer Zweckmäßigkeit” will be the final transition in Hegel’s effort to demonstrate that reason has this “truly synthetic progression.” It is the final transition to the “absolute idea” as a purposive, “self-producing concept.”<sup>30</sup>

The negative/positive difference that Hegel is referencing between the *KrV* and the *KU* is, I suggest, precisely that Kant makes this internal duality of the imagination in the first *Critique* into an *a priori* principle grounding the third *Critique* and so recognizes a key structure of the mind not merely as a quality of the imagination, but as a fundamental principle of pure reason. Put differently, Kant takes the *a priori/a posteriori* domains and shows them to be *internal* to a single fundamental principle of reason. Although there is not space here to defend any particular reading of the third *Critique*, I wish simply to identify a few passages to keep in mind. These passages are moments in which Kant specifies features of the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. These passages will serve as a seven-part image of how we might understand the *a priori* principle of free lawfulness of the imagination in a manner that is sympathetic to Hegel’s interpretation.

**First**, In his 1787 letter to Reinhold, Kant famously announces his “discovery” of a new *a priori* principle,<sup>31</sup> which he terms “purposiveness.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> WL 12.157.

<sup>29</sup> It should be kept in mind that “negative” in the *Science of Logic* and Hegel’s entire system is a technical term that identifies a necessary quality whereby the “movement of the concept,” the “truly synthetic progression,” or “self-producing concept” is possible (WL 12.205). As such, “only negatively” is a critique *qua* “only,” since it is still an important negative step, but not the full picture.

<sup>30</sup> This is not to claim that “self-producing concept” or “self-determining” are first introduced in the *Logic* through the chapter on Teleology. That is not the case. These are the precise qualities of the method of reason that Hegel has been slowly proving throughout the *Logic*, from the first chapter. It is only in this chapter on Teleology, however, that these are finally affirmed as the truth of the methodological structure of reason. It is thereby the final step, in Hegel’s terms “final transition,” of the proof of the *Logic* as a whole.

<sup>31</sup> Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence*, pp. 127–8.

<sup>32</sup> In the words of Henry Allison, this principle is “the condition under which” synthetic, *a priori* reflecting judgment is “capable of a critique in the first place” (*Kant’s Theory of Taste*, p. 13). At the heart of each critique is a transcendental deduction, and such a deduction concerns precisely the *a priori* principle by which Kant establishes the validity of the given synthetic *a priori* judgment type. For more on this, see Pollok 2017, pp. 200, 212, 218.

**Second**, consider Kant's varied uses of the term "purposiveness," which include the following four: (a) *form of purposiveness* as a kind of "schema" or "symbol," which results from the imagination's relation to the understanding and reason, respectively<sup>33</sup>; (b) *formal purposiveness*, which concerns the relation of the faculties of the imagination and the understanding as standing in an actual relation identifiable in some respects as a "harmonious free play"<sup>34</sup>; (c) the *a priori* principle of purposiveness<sup>35</sup>; and (d) at least a formal difference between the *a priori* principle of purposiveness and "such a transcendental principle as a law."<sup>36</sup> Whatever the relationship between these forms of purposiveness, whether they are continuous, identical in various ways, or altogether incompatible or invalid distinctions, (a), (b), and (d) are not what I have in view in this argument. The following points are intended merely to identify a possible way that we might (in an effort to understand Hegel) reasonably read Kant's conception of (c) the synthetic *a priori* principle of purposiveness.

**Third**, Kant identifies two specifications of the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. These are (i) subjective purposiveness (in the *Aesthetic Power of Judgment*) and (ii) objective purposiveness (in the *Teleological Power of Judgment*). It is not readily apparent whether the objective, "concept of purposiveness in nature" is actually an *a priori* principle.<sup>37</sup> It might merely be a regulative result, i.e., a "maxim" that is "occasioned" by the subjective specification of purposiveness, as Kant at one point suggests.<sup>38</sup> In fact, I think that this latter interpretation is the most plausible. For our present purposes, we need only observe that some underlying relation between teleology and aesthetics in the *KU* is operative at the level of the *a priori* principle of purposiveness, such that Kant says,

the power of judgment's concept of a purposiveness of nature still belongs among the concepts of nature, but only as a regulative principle of the faculty of cognition, although the aesthetic judgment on certain objects (of nature or of art) that occasions it is a constitutive principle with regard to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.<sup>39</sup>

**Fourth**, of the subjective specification of the "constitutive principle," Kant says, "the principle of [aesthetic judgment] is the subjective principle of the power of judgment in general."<sup>40</sup> This is key, because it clues us into the fact that the free lawfulness grounding the aesthetic free play

<sup>33</sup> *KU* 5:352–5.      <sup>34</sup> *KU* 5:217–8, 5:287, 5:380.

<sup>35</sup> *KU* 5:286, 5:288, 5:376, 5:417, 20:225–6, 20:202.

<sup>36</sup> *KU* 5:180, 20:225.

<sup>37</sup> *KU* 5:196.

<sup>38</sup> *KU* 5:376.      <sup>39</sup> *KU* 5:197.

<sup>40</sup> Section 35, 5:286; cf. 5:287, 20:232–3, 20:243, 5:181, 5:197, 5:226–7, 20:249–50.

grounds not merely aesthetic judgments, but teleological judgements as well, since the latter fall under the domain of the “subjective principle of the power of judgment *in general*.” The objective principle of the *power of judgment in general* (which governs determining judgments of the understanding) was the subject of the first *Critique*, and if teleological judgements do not fall under the domain of the “subjective principle of the power of judgment in general,” then Kant should have included the analytic of teleological judgments not in the third, but rather in the first critique. Whether or not he was right to do so, Kant does include teleological judgments under the same subjective principle of the power of judgment *in general*, namely, the principle of free lawfulness (i.e., of purposiveness).

**Fifth**, “. . . consequently all our judgments, in accordance with the order of the higher cognitive faculties, can be divided into theoretical, aesthetic, and practical, whereby aesthetic judgments are understood only the judgements of reflection, which alone are related to a principle of the power of judgment, as a higher faculty of cognition.”<sup>41</sup>

**Sixth**, concluding the entire Analytic of the Beautiful, which he says is alone in need of a deduction from its *a priori* principle:<sup>42</sup> “If one draws the conclusion from the above analyses, it turns out that everything flows from the concept of [aesthetic judgments of the beautiful] as a faculty for judging an object in relation to the **free lawfulness** of the imagination.”<sup>43</sup> This principle of “free lawfulness of the imagination” is a principle as if it were independently free and lawful, “yet for the imagination to be free and yet lawful by itself . . . is a contradiction. The understanding alone gives the law.”<sup>44</sup> The free lawfulness of the imagination is thus a principle of

lawfulness without law and a subjective correspondence of the imagination to the understanding without an objective one – where the representation is related to a determinate concept of an object – are consistent with the free lawfulness of the understanding (which is also called purposiveness without an end) and with the peculiarity of an [aesthetic judgment of the beautiful].<sup>45</sup>

**Seventh**, this *a priori* principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination [*freie Gesetzmäßigkeit der Einbildungskraft*],<sup>46</sup> or “*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*” grounds the validity by which the aesthetic judgment “as a subjective power of judgment, requires a principle of subsumption, not of

<sup>41</sup> KU 20:226.

<sup>42</sup> KU 5:279.

<sup>43</sup> KU 5:240.

<sup>44</sup> KU 5:241.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> KU 5:240.

intuitions under concepts, but of the faculty of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) under the faculty of concepts (i.e., the understanding), insofar as the former **in its freedom** is in harmony with the latter **in its lawfulness**.<sup>47</sup> Put differently, it is this *a priori* principle that gives universal validity to reflecting judgments *a priori*. Therein the principle of purposiveness (i.e., free lawfulness of the imagination) is that whereby the imagination and understanding are in “harmonious”<sup>48</sup> relation such that the “*understanding is in the service of the imagination and not vice versa*.”<sup>49</sup>

To be clear, I am not interested in defending that this is the best reading of Kant, though I think it is. Rather, it is this notion of free lawfulness grounding the synthetic necessity of a new judgment form that Hegel makes so much of in Kant. The “understanding is in the service of the imagination and not *vice versa*.” In other words, the structure of determining judgments is flipped. The key here is not the more obvious point that Kant introduces *a priori* reflecting judgments. The great significance pertains to the fact that Kant is proving the fundamental validity and structure of a form of pure reason revealed through that very principle grounding reflecting judgments: free lawfulness.

In short, the free lawfulness of the imagination is to reflecting judgment what the synthetic unity of apperception was to theoretical judgments of cognition. It is a principle that contains in itself the form of reason’s free productive power and the form of the lawfulness of the understanding. This new pure form of reason grounds a real relationship in which the understanding is in the service of the imagination, not “*vice versa*.” The resulting paradox is a principle of “free lawfulness,” a principle of “purposiveness.” If the autonomy of the will was a principle of freedom, and the synthetic unity of apperception a principle of lawful determination is perhaps not surprising that the internal structure of Kant’s newly discovered “bridging” principle is a free lawfulness that grounds an indeterminate, purposive relation of reason’s powers. The significance for Hegel is precisely that it displays the possibility of a true internal unity to reason: an organic, dialectic synthesis as reason’s very method.

Now, since Kant says that this principle of purposiveness “mediates the connection of the domain of the concept of nature with the concept

<sup>47</sup> *KU* 5:286–7.      <sup>48</sup> *KU* 20:224.

<sup>49</sup> *My emphasis*, *KU* 5:242; in judgments of the sublime it is practical reason that is in the service of the imagination as opposed to the understanding, where we find “merely the subjective play of the powers of the mind (imagination and reason) as harmonious even in their contrast” (*KU* 5:258).

of freedom in its consequences”<sup>50</sup> and, put differently, “mediates the connection of the two faculties [of theoretical and practical reason],”<sup>51</sup> it is not surprising that Hegel had this *a priori* principle of “purposiveness” in mind when crediting Kant with his “greatest service to philosophy” and with having “opened up the Idea.” After all, it is directly following Hegel’s introduction of purposiveness in the *Logic* as the final transition to the Idea that he likewise shows the unity of theoretical and practical “cognition” in the *Logic*.<sup>52</sup> That is, Hegel’s “*Zweckmäßigkeit*” is at the core of the final transition in the *Logic* by which the relation between theoretical and practical reason are displayed as *unified* in the free, self-determining necessity of the absolute idea.

We must not miss this point: Why is Kant’s third principle so important for Hegel’s task? The reason, I will argue in Section 3 and Section 4, is that Kant’s notion of purposiveness displays an internal unity of the *a priori*/*a posteriori* as reciprocally necessitating each other. This is key for Hegel since he goes through great pains in the *Logic* to argue that a unity that is not internal to and internally necessitated by the thing in question is not a “true unity.”<sup>53</sup> So, for him, the imagination is significant precisely in that it does not merely unify or bring together the *a priori* and *a posteriori* through a mutually external connection, but rather shows their identity. That Kant identifies a principle capable of such a true unity of the *a priori* and *a posteriori* is what Hegel sees as Kant’s great insight. This, at least, is a sketch of a possible understanding of Kant’s “*innere Zweckmäßigkeit*” as referenced by Hegel.

At present, however, we need to take up the standard interpolations of the *Philosophy of Nature* into the *Logic* by which Hegel’s notion of *Zweckmäßigkeit* is taken to refer to a Kantian idea of a *Naturzweck* or a kind of Aristotelian notion of the soul as a “principle of life.”<sup>54</sup> Both are mistaken.

## 2. Standard Interpolations of the Philosophy of Nature into the Logic

It is tempting to interpret the distinction between “äußerer und innerer Zweckmäßigkeit” as the distinction between an external (mechanistic)

<sup>50</sup> KU 5:197. <sup>51</sup> KU 20:202. <sup>52</sup> WL 12.235–6. <sup>53</sup> WL 21.166, 11.354.

<sup>54</sup> *De Anima* II.4, 415b26–8; cf. II.3, 414b19–25. What it means, on Aristotle’s account, for something to have a principle of life (i.e., soul) is to have an internal, unified structure according to which it grows, sustains itself, and in light of which it is susceptible to various kinds of decay. Of the soul, Aristotle states, “the soul is the cause of its body alike in all three senses which we explicitly recognize. It is the source of movement, it is the end, it is the essence of the whole living body” (*De Anima* II.4, 415b10–2).

causality in the case of an artifact (e.g., a watch) and an internal (teleological) causality in the case of a natural end (e.g., an organism). In “The Logic of Life: Hegel’s Philosophical Defense of Teleological Explanation of Living Beings,” James Kreines does precisely this.<sup>55</sup> He then argues that, in contrast to Kant’s notion of a natural end [*Naturzweck*], Hegel’s “analysis of life is more complex.”<sup>56</sup> Where the idea of a natural end is for Kant merely regulative, such that we cannot claim cognition of the object.<sup>57</sup> Hegel’s account of the same, according to Kreines, complexifies the picture through three major requirements,<sup>58</sup> such that the final conception of “life” that results “differs greatly from Kant’s analysis of the concept of a *Naturzweck*.”<sup>59</sup>

Ultimately, Kreines would have us read Hegel’s logic of life as an “explanation, in response to Kant’s specific problem, of how a complex system (e.g., an organism) produced by reproduction might satisfy the requirements of inner purposiveness.”<sup>60</sup> Somehow, on Kreines’ view, Hegel’s logic of life – what was for Kant a “merely” regulative idea of *einen Naturzweck* – adequately explains organisms. This means that Hegel’s logic of life is not merely regulative but (in Kant’s terms) constitutive or determining. Following Kreines, we are to understand Hegel’s idea of life in the *Logic* as escaping the Kantian regulative classification because “living beings satisfy the analysis of inner purposiveness not in virtue of the relation between the whole and the mutually external material ‘parts’ in space, but in virtue of the relation between the whole and the ‘members’” (6:476).<sup>61</sup> Beyond the dubious claim that this overcomes the Kantian status of a natural end as merely regulative for cognition, it reveals a deeper problem.

Kreines takes inner purposiveness to be a matter of real teleology of the kind characteristic of the *second* part of Hegel’s system: the *Philosophy of Nature*. On Kreines’ view:

the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* offer philosophical arguments in favor of a different metaphysical account of reality – one that contrasts with “organic monism” . . . arguing that the whole of reality is structured into different “levels” or *Stufen*. Mechanistic phenomena form the lowest level, and biological phenomena form a much higher level.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Kreines 2008, p. 345. <sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 358, 348–9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 353; this regulative idea is for Kant “logically consistent” and has heuristic value for theoretical reason.

<sup>58</sup> These three requirements are: (1) “self preservation,” i.e., “all members are reciprocally momentary means as well as momentary ends” (*EL* section 216); (2) “engaged in a ‘struggle with the outer world’” (*EN* section 365Z); and (3) “mortal” and so “must aim for the reproduction . . . by which a species endures” (2008, p. 356).

<sup>59</sup> Kreines 2008, p. 357. <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 370. <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 370. <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 375.



This, however, cannot be a correct account of the *Logic*. The real problem with Kreines' account is that it loses any significant distinction between "logic of life" and the "nature of life." It is the idea of life in both cases, but in one case the *idea of life* in the *Logic*, in the other it is the *idea of life* in the *Philosophy of Nature*. One would hope that there is a meaningful difference, otherwise the latter (one-third of Hegel's *Encyclopedic* system) is a superfluous repetition of the former. This is precisely what happens on Kreines' account. Hegel's philosophy of nature and his logic are collapsed into one.

More specifically, Kreines interpolates Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* into a reading of Hegel's chapters on Mechanism, Chemism, Teleology, and Life in the *Logic*. My point is not to critique Kreines' view, which is actually a particularly lucid interpretation of life in the *Philosophy of Nature*.

Kreines is not alone in giving an interpolation of the logic of life. Indeed, such interpolations are the norm. There are several immediate reasons, however, for rejecting this norm. If we follow Kreines, then it is not at all clear why Hegel had to write an entire *Philosophy of Nature* between the *Encyclopedia of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of Spirit* (which he took to be a *necessary* part of his tripartite system).<sup>63</sup>

At best we can say with Kreines that the only remaining task for the *Philosophy of Nature* after the *Logic* is to show that "our empirical knowledge of plant and animal biology fits the analysis of life,"<sup>64</sup> and showing this will be "uncontroversial – after all, there are living beings, and they do assimilate and reproduce. The philosophical heavy lifting comes in the *Logic*."<sup>65</sup> But is this right? Is it true that Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* is superfluous; that it does nothing but state the uncontroversial fact that there are living beings?

If *that* is the view, then the *Logic* does indeed do the "heavy lifting." Such a reading, however, cannot square well with the *Logic* and contradicts Hegel's many claims about the significance of the *Philosophy of Nature*.<sup>66</sup> What is more, such a view invalidates Hegel's argument concerning the constitutive status of the *Philosophy of Spirit* through the *Philosophy of Nature*.<sup>67</sup> These are the immediate problems that arise from such an interpolation. Yet, such a reading is the norm.

<sup>63</sup> *EG* section 575–7. <sup>64</sup> 2008, p. 361. <sup>65</sup> 2008, p. 361. <sup>66</sup> *N* section 376.

<sup>67</sup> *EG* section 575: Here Hegel notes that Nature is central to three systematic "syllogisms": (1) a middle term between the *Logic* and *Spirit*, (2) a presupposed unity with the principles of the logic to form the content of mind (*EG* section 576), and (3) a division of philosophy into its "universal extreme, as process of the objectively and implicitly existing Idea. The self-judging of the Idea into



One might think that Robert Pippin's non-metaphysical, Kantian-leaning account would avoid such an interpolation into Hegel's logic of life. Indeed, the section on "Purpose and logical life" in *Hegel's Idealism* distinguishes between "nothing other than the Notion [*der Begriff*]"<sup>68</sup> in its determinations" and its "real content," i.e., the "presentation which the Notion gives itself in the form of external existence."<sup>69</sup> However, it quickly becomes apparent that Pippin is likewise interpolating the *Philosophy of Nature* in the *Logic*. According to Pippin, Hegel's logic of purposiveness is meant to show "how 'internal' requirements of Notionality [the Concept] somehow 'play themselves out' when the object of study, 'external existence,' is the observable natural world."<sup>70</sup> Put differently, Pippin would have us read the logic of purposiveness as having the equivalent status as an idea of a natural end or teleology of an organism.

If this were what Hegel was endeavoring to show in the logic of purposiveness and life, then we should conclude that he failed for two primary reasons. First, the *Logic* displays an absence of examples (of organisms, laws, etc.), where the *Philosophy of Nature* abounds with such precise examples and determinate ideas. Second, Hegel fails to give anything like a dynamic account in the *Logic* of the idea of teleology. At best, one steps away from the text with something like Kreines's derived "requirements" that somehow govern a conception of teleology; but even these requirements are vague and unsatisfying.

Not surprisingly, Pippin comes to a similar conclusion. He follows this account of purposiveness in the *Logic* with the assessment, "Hegel's success in such a demonstration seems to me quite limited."<sup>71</sup> At the same time, Pippin tries to salvage Hegel's supposedly inauspicious account of purposiveness. On Pippin's reading, the only real significance of this notion of purposiveness for Hegel's *Logic* is that "with the [Concept] of purpose, the general issue of Reason's own purposiveness – in Hegel's *Logic*, its internal development – and the nature of the idealist claim made for the objectivity of the results of such a development, are both now clearly in focus."<sup>72</sup> I find this attempt to save the worth of Hegel's teleology unsatisfactory.

its two appearances characterizes both as "self-knowing reason's manifestations" (*EG* section 577). Further, the systematic truth shown through and retained by the *Philosophy of Nature* is the externality of the "action of cognition," in which the absolute Mind "eternally sets itself to work" (*EG* section 577). At the very least, then, it would seem that Hegel thinks the *Philosophy of Nature* does indeed do some systematic "heavy lifting" after all.

<sup>68</sup> Pippin uses the term "Notion" for Hegel's "*der Begriff*."

<sup>69</sup> *EL* section 213; Pippin 1989, p. 243.

<sup>70</sup> 2001, p. 243.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

It is not clear to me what significance is gained by the notion of “now clearly in focus,” since as Pippin notes, this quality of reason was present from the beginning. It is not clear how a failed attempt or “quite limited success” at grounding a notion of teleology should bring the purposiveness of reason clearly into view in anything like a helpful manner. The bigger problem, though, is that Pippin, like Kreines, is interpolating into the *Logic* content that Hegel places squarely in the *Philosophy of Nature*. Nor does appeal to Hegel's account of teleology in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* help,<sup>73</sup> since such an appeal merely begs the question by going further than the *Philosophy of Nature*, straight to the product of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, namely, the historical shapes of the *Spirit* or the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhG*). The *logical necessity* of Hegel's account of Teleology in the *PhG* depends (systematically) on the *Logic*, not *vice versa*.<sup>74</sup>

Concerning this distinction between the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature*, we should also ask this question: Why does Hegel not credit Aristotle with inner purposiveness? Indeed, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel is clear in his credit to Aristotelian teleology, as Karen Ng and Terry Pinkard discuss at length.<sup>75</sup> Further, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel identifies Aristotle's notion of the soul as the “most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of philosophical value on [the “speculative treatment” of the mind].”<sup>76</sup> So why, here in the *Logic*, does Hegel say that Kant, not Aristotle, introduces this idea and thereby offers his greatest service to philosophy?<sup>77</sup> Why, moreover, does he credit this to Kant at the point of transition in the *Logic* between the sphere in which critical idealism ends and absolute idealism begins?

I do not deny that this conception of *innerer Zweckmäßigkeit* is a principle of the *Logic* that will ground, in Hegel's philosophy of nature, something very much like Aristotle's conception of the soul or Kant's notion of a “natural end.” Not unlike Hegel, Kant's idea of a natural end is the idea of a thing as “reciprocally” “producing the other parts” and “self-organizing.”<sup>78</sup> This reciprocally producing quality is a twofold causality (i.e., where a thing is “cause and effect of itself”),<sup>79</sup> such that it is both an

<sup>73</sup> *PhG* section 169–72.

<sup>74</sup> And “in the context of this logical exposition, it is from the *idea of life* that the idea of spirit has emerged,” *WL* 12.196.

<sup>75</sup> Pinkard 2012, pp. 17–22; Ng 2016. <sup>76</sup> *N* section 378.

<sup>77</sup> In the lesser *Logic* Hegel also notes that it is an idea “contained” in Aristotle's thought, and this is why he will draw so extensively on Aristotle in the *Philosophy of Nature*, section 204. The difference is that it is not an idea made explicit in its logical necessity. By contrast, Kant does make it explicit.

<sup>78</sup> *KU* 5:374. <sup>79</sup> *KU* 5:370–1.

effect of natural causality and the cause of itself *as if* it were artist of itself through its own formative power (what Kant terms “*Bildungskraft*”).<sup>80</sup> Our question, then, is this: What is purposiveness as a *logical* necessity of reason, where our answer does justice to Hegel’s distinction between the status of the *Logic* and *Nature*?<sup>81</sup> In other words, what is it that gives *logic* itself this structure and movement of internal purposiveness? And what does it mean for *the Logic* to prove purposiveness?

To answer this, we must recall Hegel’s stipulation for an adequate *Logic*: “Logic, on the contrary, cannot presuppose any of these forms of reflection, these rules and laws of thinking, for they are part of its content and they first have to be established within it.”<sup>82</sup> This is the necessary starting “point” for the *Logic* if it is to remain what it is through and through, since “in no science is the need to begin with the *thing* [*Sache*] itself, without preliminary reflections, felt more strongly than in the science of logic.”<sup>83</sup> Not even the *Sache* (proper object) or method of the logic can be presupposed:

Logic, therefore, cannot say what it is in advance, rather does this knowledge of itself only emerge as the final result and completion of its whole treatment. Likewise its subject matter, *thinking* or more specifically *conceptual* thinking, is essentially elaborated within it; its concept is generated in the course of this elaboration and cannot therefore be given in advance.<sup>84</sup>

It is in the chapter on Teleology that “innere Zweckmäßigkeit” “emerges as the result” of what has come before and as the final transition to the Idea and “completion” of the *Logic*.<sup>85</sup> To take “generation” here to refer to anything like metaphysical “content” is to undermine precisely that abstraction from all presuppositions that Hegel stipulates and by which the *Logic* proceeds. To define “purposiveness” in the *Logic* is, then, unavoidably a matter of the abstract *necessity* of thought.

Unfortunately, there is no way around this. For Hegel, there could be no absolute *Philosophy of Nature* or *Spirit* without these stages of highly

<sup>80</sup> *KU* 5:373–4.

<sup>81</sup> Karen Ng’s “Life and Mind in Hegel’s *Logic* and Subjective Spirit” at times uses terminology that is suggestive of a Kreinesian interpolation. For example: “Logic aims to highlight what Hegel takes to be the formal aspects of this existence: the logical concept of life attempts to identify the formal characteristics of sentient living activity, determining the mode of life-form activity that is relevant for cognition in general, independent of particular external manifestations” (2016, Part III). I would agree with this phrasing if “logical concept of life” were replaced with “the idea of life in the *Philosophy of Nature*.” That is, the logic of life concerns the logic of the concept, which grounds the work Ng has in view, but only in the *Philosophy of Nature*.

<sup>82</sup> *WL* 21.2.7. <sup>83</sup> My change, *WL* 21.2.7. <sup>84</sup> *WL* 21.2.7. <sup>85</sup> *Ibid*.

abstract proofs of (conditional) necessity that form the *Logic*. That is why, at the end of the *Logic*, Hegel says:

A comment may be in order here to differentiate . . . the logical life as the idea from natural life as treated in the *philosophy of nature*, and from life in so far as it is bound to *spirit*. – As treated in the philosophy of nature, as the life of nature and to that extent exposed to the *externality of existence*, life is *conditioned* by inorganic nature and its moments as idea are a manifold of actual shapes. Life in the idea is without such *presuppositions*, which are in shapes of actuality; its presupposition is the *concept* as we have considered it, on the one hand as subjective, and on the other hand as objective . . . the concept that came on the scene earlier as a subjective concept is the soul of life itself; it is the impulse that gives itself reality through a process of objectification.<sup>86</sup>

We will return, in Section 4, to ask how *Zweckmäßigkeit* makes possible the transition to “the soul of life itself,” to the “impulse that gives itself reality through a process of objectification,” namely, to the self-determining unity of reason.

For now, we need to proceed to this carefully, by asking the question that precedes it. Namely, what might be involved in an account that takes seriously Hegel's differentiation between the chapters in the *Logic* on “Mechanism,” “Chemism,” and “Teleology” and those same three divisions by which he outlines the entire *Philosophy of Nature*? Hegel addresses this matter at the outset of his chapter on Mechanism in the *Logic*.

### 3. Mechanism

Hegel's argument in this chapter on Mechanism, which culminates in his chapter on teleology, concerns the “mechanical object” and the “mechanical process.” However, Hegel reminds us, we must resist the temptation to assume content for these.<sup>87</sup> Our temptation is to ask, “What might be an example of such an object and such a process that would fit what Hegel has in mind (and thereby offer clarity to his abstract language)?” This tendency is gravely mistaken. Hegel reminds us of this, saying, “the object, therefore, has neither properties nor accidents, for these are separable from the thing or the substance, whereas in the object particularity is absolutely reflected into the totality.”<sup>88</sup> Sentences such as this should not be taken as assertions of how we should actually understand real mechanical objects.

<sup>86</sup> WL 12.180.

<sup>87</sup> WL 12.134; cf. WL 21.27.

<sup>88</sup> WL 12.134.

Here Hegel is proceeding through the necessary requirements of *thought* and nothing more.

To see how far abstracted Hegel is from any determinations that might be immediate conditions of possible experience, recall again that even Hegel's correlates to Kant's pure forms of space and time are not given here. Instead, he turns to such "pure forms of intuition" in the corresponding section on mechanism in the *Philosophy of Nature*. It is there that he provides his account of the "pure form" of space<sup>89</sup> and time,<sup>90</sup> as well as of basic principles and laws of nature.<sup>91</sup> In short, after his account of the pure forms of space and time, he takes up the conditions of experience and proceeds to both cognition of nature and to the teleological conditions for living organisms. Whatever else we may say, one thing is clear: Hegel is certainly not concerned with principles of real mechanism in the *Logic*.

At the risk of overstating this point, consider a key moment in the chapter on mechanism. After providing us with the initial account of what a pure concept of a "mechanical object" is at this stage of the *Logic*, Hegel suggests that a close, though still inadequate, example would be Leibniz's principle of the *monad*. Notice that he says that the monad "would be more of an object."<sup>92</sup> It is not an adequate example of mechanical object, but at least "more of one" than any other ready candidate. Put differently, even the example that best fits his definition, i.e., something like Leibniz's monad, is still inadequate, a mere approximation. No example can be adequate, because the concept in question is a structure of the necessity of thought, not yet an idea of the real world. Furthermore, this precise articulation of the mechanical object turns out to be problematic; it never does become an actual idea of the mechanical order. Now, while Leibniz's principle of the *monad* does not fully meet the specifications of a *pure* mechanical object *for the Logic*, it comes close because "it is a total representation of the world which, shut up within its *intensive subjectivity*, in essence at least is supposed to be a *one*."<sup>93</sup> Even this singularly helpful example is immediately shown to be problematic because of a fundamental assumption necessary for the idea of the *monad* but unjustified by the pure necessity of thought: "The need to avoid the *interaction* of substances was founded on the moment of absolute *self-subsistence* and *originariness* which was made a fundamental assumption."<sup>94</sup> It turns out that a "self-subsistent" [selbständig] object cannot truly be (on a purely logical level) self-subsistent over and against the necessary relation in which it stands to

<sup>89</sup> *N* section 254.

<sup>90</sup> *N* section 258.

<sup>91</sup> *N* sections 263–4, 269–70, 275, 285–94, 309–20.

<sup>92</sup> *WL* 12.134.

<sup>93</sup> *WL* 12.135.

<sup>94</sup> *WL* 12.137.

other objects (in pure thought). This impossibility stems from the very “fundamental assumption” of it as a pure “self-subsistent” object. That is, the concept itself becomes untenable on its own ground in light of the logical necessity shown so far. Put differently, that which the mechanical object is posited as being requires a process that results in a contradiction of that originally posited mechanical object and so cannot be a true concept. However, in the process, the contradiction reveals further necessities of thought that lead toward a kind of “free necessity” in chemism and finally teleology in the structure of thought.<sup>95</sup> This free necessity should be a clue to the self-determining “free lawfulness” that we will see in Hegel’s notion of *Zweckmäßigkeit*.

What I hope is clear is that mechanism in the *Logic* (which leads to Teleology) has to do with the necessity of thought in full abstraction from anything like the content found in the *Philosophy of Nature*. The key here is that we must walk with Hegel’s argument patiently if we wish to avoid invalidly importing precisely that by which it would be falsified.<sup>96</sup> Now we are in a position to look to the chapter on Teleology with the right lens, neither interpolating the philosophy of nature nor the possible later similarities with either Aristotelian or Kantian notions of real teleology.

#### 4. Teleology and the Free Lawfulness of the Imagination

Hegel’s account of freedom and necessity in this chapter is key to understanding the *internal unity* of the *a priori/a posteriori* that Hegel says Kant gives in the form of a principle of *free lawfulness* of the imagination.

Hegel takes the chapter on Teleology to provide his system with the resolution to the antinomy between determinism and freedom: “The antinomy of . . . determinism and freedom is equally concerned with the opposition of mechanism and teleology . . .”<sup>97</sup> and “since they do stand opposed, the necessary first question is, which of the two concepts is the true one; and the higher and truly telling question is, *whether there is a third which is their truth, or whether one of them is the truth of the other.*”<sup>98</sup> Hegel’s resolution will be that freedom is the truth of determinism, where the latter is a constitutive quality of the former. If this sounds like a

<sup>95</sup> WL 12.146.

<sup>96</sup> And such falsification proves nothing but that X-system with Y-import is false, but such a modification and failure says nothing about Hegel’s absolute idealism.

<sup>97</sup> WL 12.154. <sup>98</sup> WL 12.155.

relationship in which “lawfulness” is subordinated to “freedom” in order to form a unity of free lawfulness or “lawfulness without a law,” as Kant calls it in the *KU*, that is because it is precisely such a “purposive” subordination of the one to the other, as we will see.

We might summarize Hegel’s definition of purposiveness of the concept in the *Logic as the internal unity of necessity and freedom constitutive of the self-determining movement of reason*. Or in Hegel’s terms, the truth of the concept existing in and for itself:

Now purposiveness presents itself from the first as something of a generally *higher nature*, as an *intelligence* [Die Zweckmäßigkeit nun zeigt sich zunächst als ein *Höheres* überhaupt, als ein *Verstand*] that *externally* determines the manifoldness of objects *through a unity that exists in and for itself*, so that the indifferent determinacies of the objects become *essential by virtue of this connection*. In mechanism they become so through the *mere form of necessity* that leaves their *content* indifferent, for they are supposed to remain external and only the understanding as such is expected to find satisfaction by recognizing its principle of union, the abstract identity. In teleology [der Teleologie], on the contrary, the content becomes important, for teleology presupposes a concept, *something determined in and for itself* and consequently self-determining [weil sie einen Begriff, ein *an und für sich Bestimmtes* und damit Selbstbestimmendes voraussetzt], and has therefore extracted from the *connection* of differences and their reciprocal determinateness, from the *form*, a *unity that is reflected into itself*, *something that is determined in and for itself* and is consequently a *content*.<sup>99</sup>

Note the parallel to Kant’s synthetic unity of apperception and, at the same time, the difference. Hegel is showing that the principle of reason is indeed a movement structured by a kind of lawful synthesis, and that this synthesis cannot be viewed mechanically. Instead, it must be viewed as an organic, dialectic, free lawfulness. And, as Robert Pippin and Paul Franks argue, the methodological structure found in the chapter on Teleology has been indeterminately present from the beginning.

We might summarize Hegel’s argument in the chapter on teleology as follows: (1) The necessity of thought traced to this point of the *Logic* finally proves that it is a structure of self-determination. Put differently, thought’s necessity is a lawful, yet somehow also free, movement and totality: “according to its form purpose is a *totality* infinite within itself [der Zweck ist seiner Form nach eine *in sich unendliche* Totalität].”<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> WL 12.156; This self-determining *logical* structure finally grounds the move from pure structure to itself as content.

<sup>100</sup> WL 12.156.



(2) As such, "Teleology possesses in general the higher principle, the concept in its concrete existence, which is in and for itself the infinite and absolute – a principle of freedom."<sup>101</sup> (3) As concerns determinism and freedom in the *Logic*, we find here the "one thing that alone is of philosophical interest namely the investigation of which of the two principles has truth in and for itself."<sup>102</sup> The "purposive process" is the self-determination of the "purposive object," which is, in turn, the determining subject, a (qualitatively) infinite subject. (4) Thereby, Hegel *grounds the self-determining truth, in and for itself*, that provides the highest (most abstract) *ground of the unity* of the *a priori* and *a posteriori* of the absolute idea. More simply, the structure of reason is a dialectic of free lawful purposiveness.

Again, if this strikes the reader as suspiciously similar to Kant's "free lawfulness of the imagination" (which grounds the productive power of artistic "genius" whereby, Kant claims, "spirit" is self-determining and productive,<sup>103</sup> and which arguably grounds judgments of nature as possessing a formative power [Bildungskraft],<sup>104</sup> and, thereby, as "art and artist of itself,"<sup>105</sup> i.e., "as cause and effect of itself,")<sup>106</sup> ... that is because *it is* suspiciously similar to that very same principle. In this similarity, it accords with Hegel's praise of Kant for being the one to give this principle to philosophy. Hegel does not shy away from crediting the heart of this moment to Kant, and neither should we.

Now, importantly, Hegel is not merely drawing on Kant's principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination; he is also transforming what was for Kant the principle of theoretical reason (the synthetic unity of apperception) into a logic of the internal necessity. This internal necessity is the self-determining necessity of reason. This conception of inner purposiveness, then, is part of the method by which he proves that reason is not dependent on free-floating principles (as he thought Kant's system suggested), but on an internally necessitated structure or *logic*.

On Hegel's account, "Kant's discussion of the teleological principle" is "unsatisfactory" because he only uses it to ground a "subjective maxim," a regulative guide for the proper objective use of reason.<sup>107</sup> The source of dissatisfaction here for Hegel is that Kant does not recognize that this principle points to the possibility of demonstrating the very internal unity

<sup>101</sup> WL 12.157.    <sup>102</sup> WL 12.158.    <sup>103</sup> KU 5:317–18, 5:311.    <sup>104</sup> KU 5:374.

<sup>105</sup> My paraphrase of KU 5:360–1: "Hence we conceive of nature as **technical** through its own capacity; whereas if we did not ascribe such an agency to it, we would have to represent its causality as a blind mechanism."

<sup>106</sup> KU 5:370–1.    <sup>107</sup> WL 12.158–60.



and necessity of the synthetic *a priori* principles of pure reason in general. Here, I believe, the norm is to misinterpret Hegel's critique. Hegel is not suggesting that Kant's mistake was in failing to show the objectivity of this principle of purposiveness such that determining judgments of the understanding according to teleology are possible. Hegel does not argue that Kant should have defended the result of teleological judgments as "cognitions."

On the contrary, Hegel immediately specifies that what is particularly important and "worthy of note is the place that Kant assigns to" this teleological principle.<sup>108</sup> Namely, Hegel thinks Kant rightly and insightfully places this principle and its corresponding judgment-type under the domain of "a *reflective faculty of judgment*." Again, according to Hegel, "since [Kant] ascribes it to a *reflective faculty of judgment*, he makes it into a *mediating link* between the *universal of reason* and the *singular of intuition*."<sup>109</sup> In other words, Kant's insight concerning purposiveness in the *KU* is that reason has a distinct form of synthetic *a priori* validity. This distinct form does not necessitate the *a priori* and *a posteriori* dualism. Instead, this new *form* of judgment becomes a "mediating link." More specifically, this mediating link is an "intensive," qualitative link that is purely internal; and so the unity itself is an internal unity. Formulating the answer this way is too quick. Let us look more closely at the answer to the question: How should we understand this internal, mediating link?

I suggest the answer is twofold. First, Hegel orients us in the second significance of Kant's placement of teleological judgments under the faculty of reflecting judgments:

[Kant] distinguishes this *reflective judgment* from the *determining judgment*, the latter one that merely *subsumes* the particular under the universal. Such a universal that only *subsumes* is an *abstraction* that becomes *concrete* only in an *other*, in the particular. Purpose, on the contrary, is the *concrete universal* containing within itself the moment of particularity and of externality; it is therefore active and the impulse to repel itself from itself.<sup>110</sup>

In other words, for Kant's account of determining judgment, there is necessarily and *rightly* a dualism. The judgment is lawful *via* the form of the judgment, but its significance rests entirely on the empirical, which is the source of its real content. This is another way of saying that intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without intuitions are empty.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> WL 12.160.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> WL 5:160.

<sup>111</sup> A51/B75.

In itself, this isn't strictly problematic. What is significant to Hegel is that here Kant is recognizing that this method of determining "merely *subsumes* the particular under the universal. Such a universal that only *subsumes* is an *abstraction* that becomes *concrete* only in an *other*, in the particular."

By contrast, the free lawfulness of reflecting judgments consists precisely in the bridging of this externality between abstract universal and concrete particular. Namely, "Purpose, on the contrary, is the *concrete universal* containing within itself the moment of particularity and of externality";<sup>112</sup> and, "the connection of purpose is therefore more than *judgment*; it is the *syllogism* of the self-subsistent free concept that through objectivity unites itself with itself in conclusion."<sup>113</sup> That is perhaps the clearest definition of purpose that Hegel will give in the *Logic*. In short, this means that there is an internal necessity between the form and its content—in the movement of reason—that forms the very bedrock of the logic of life, such that the dualism cannot be maintained.

So, if Kant insightfully categorizes teleological judgments as reflecting and grounds their validity in the principle of purposiveness, what precisely does Hegel believe Kant misses? He misses the necessary implications of the very principle of purposiveness grounding those judgments. Namely, "the concept, as purpose, is of course an *objective judgment* in which one determination, the subject, namely the concrete concept, is self-determined, while the other is not only a predicate but external objectivity."<sup>114</sup> In this altered relation, the significance consists not in some sense of purposive design in an organic object. The deeper significance here is the mediating structure of discursive reason grounding and affirming a thoroughgoing logic of life, which will in turn establish a substratum and unity of reason with external existence. This will in turn make possible the internal, organic unification of the supersensible and sensible in an absolute principle of a singular: the human being.<sup>115</sup>

This new lawful relation internal to reason is not one of subsumption, but one in which the objectivity of the judgment consists precisely in the determination of the subject through the judgment itself. This lawful power of self-determination is reminiscent of what Kant calls "heautonomy."<sup>116</sup> Importantly, the self-determination of the subject

<sup>112</sup> WL 12.160.    <sup>113</sup> Ibid.    <sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> WL 12.247: This principle grounds the "life of spirit by virtue of which a *subject* is a *person*, is *free*."

<sup>116</sup> KU 5:185; "Strictly speaking, one must call this legislation **heautonomy**, since the power of judgment does not give the law to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself" (KU 20:225). For more on heautonomy, see Pollok 2017, pp. 279–85.

through the judgment is not one of mere “predication” but of “external objectivity.”<sup>117</sup> At later stages of Hegel’s thought, this form will ground the validity of history as the constitutive life of reason, where history involves the “external objectivity” of art, religion, philosophy, culture, etc. This principle of purposiveness picks out a moment of substantiation in the *Logic*. It is the substantiation of the dialectic method and the internal, constitutive ground of a self-determining subject.

This principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination, i.e., the principle of purposiveness, is thereby a principle of systematic contingency. This systematic contingency will (in the *Philosophy of Nature*) turn out to make possible both knowledge and growth through the empirical world history.<sup>118</sup> This principle of free lawfulness is the same structure that we will see repeated in Hegel’s account of art, culture, religion, philosophy, etc. All of those shapes of *Geist* are only grounded as valid forms of the life of spirit if they are first shown to be what Hegel calls the “truth” of self-conscious life. Here in the *Logic*, however, all we have had in view is the conditional, free-lawful necessity.

To this end, I have argued, we should interpret Hegel’s chapter on Teleology as indeed taking up “one of Kant’s greatest services to philosophy” and as showing the necessary result of the final transition to the absolute Idea. Hegel thus does not merely inherit an insightful principle from Kant; he employs this principle as the final and highest affirmation of the very structure of the absolute method of the *Logic* as a whole.

## 5. A Likely Worry and Conclusion

If something like this picture is right, and Kant’s own principle expressed the kind of fuller unity of reason that Hegel is seeking to ground, why didn’t Kant see this possibility? Hegel answers this question directly at the end of the *Logic*:

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Förster’s account of the transition in Kant’s thought from “mere predication” in discursive judgments to intuitive understanding (2012, pp. 251–3). In contrast to Förster, I do not think that Hegel embraces a non-discursive form of intuitive understanding, but rather shows the necessary outworkings of discursive reason. As such, we find Hegel making statements such as the following: “in the *Philosophy of Nature*, people have fallen back on intuition (*Anschauung*) and set it above reflective thought; but this is a mistake, for one cannot philosophize out of intuition,” N section 246, *Remark*.

<sup>118</sup> “Nature exhibits no freedom in its existence, but only *necessity* and *contingency*” (section 248), which on its own means Nature is “the *unresolved contradiction*” (section 250). It is the *Idea of Nature* and a *Philosophy of Nature* that is made possible by the *systematic contingency* given in the *Logic* through purposiveness and the Idea of Life.

Kant made the profound observation that there are *synthetic* principles *a priori*, and he recognized as their root the unity of self-consciousness, hence the self-identity of the concept. However, he takes the *specific* connection, the relational concepts and the synthetic principles, *from formal logic as given*; the deduction of these should have been the exposition of the transition of that simple unity of self-consciousness into these determinations and distinctions; but Kant spared himself the effort of demonstrating this.<sup>119</sup>

This is why, on Hegel's view, his own "exposition of the transition" of the self-determining "unity of self-consciousness" can be viewed as a fuller or more complete deduction of those fundamental conditions or principles of *reason* that Kant gives. So, on Hegel's view, Kant rightly says that the principle of the free lawfulness of the imagination bridges the domains of freedom and necessity and of practical and theoretical cognition. However, Kant could not have shown the internal necessity of this bridging principle (nor the resulting transition to absolute idealism). This is because he had not undertaken, or had "spared himself the effort," to show the fundamental, internal necessity grounding his three *a priori* principles: (1) *the synthetic unity of apperception*, (2) *the autonomy of the will*, and (3) *purposiveness*. Hegel's *Logic* proceeds through the necessity of thought with many similar results to Kant's critical idealism, but he is unwilling to take an approach that requires postulating principles whose internal necessity and unity is not shown.<sup>120</sup> While Hegel thinks that Kant's approach necessarily resulted in dualism, Kant's transcendental dualism is not thereby a necessary result of a critique of pure *discursive* reason.

I wish to note one likely objection to my claim concerning the unity of reason. Someone might object that the kind of unity in question with Hegel's speculative thought is importantly a negative unity, a unity that maintains opposition, whereas Kant's unity – as displayed in judgments of the beautiful – find their normative source in the principle of purposiveness and evidence a unity *qua harmony*. Such a reading of Kant is fundamentally mistaken. The principle of purposiveness grounds aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment includes both judgments of the beautiful and the sublime. While a judgment of the beautiful displays a kind of harmony,<sup>121</sup> judgments of the sublime display "disharmony,"<sup>122</sup> contra-purposiveness, and a felt "violence" to the imagination.<sup>123</sup> Thus, the purposive form of unity of aesthetic judgments, which includes both

<sup>119</sup> WL 12.205.

<sup>120</sup> For Hegel, as Paul Franks shows, it is in this sense that Idealism is a matter of all or nothing, 2005.

<sup>121</sup> And even internal to this "harmony" is the *possibility* of a retained "negative" or dialectic. That is, such a possibility is not *a priori* ruled out.

<sup>122</sup> KU 5:244–5. <sup>123</sup> KU 5:245, 5:246.

judgment types, is not so easily differentiated from the kind of inner unity of speculative thought found in Hegel's *Logic* merely on the grounds of a "negative" retention in the kind of unity of the latter.

My analysis in this chapter leaves much to be discussed. Minimally, however, in our interpretations of Hegel's system, we must remember that the status of the *Logic* is still the grounding, the *science*, of the necessity by which the idea of "spirit" is able to emerge. Likewise, the *Logic* itself does not take up the "Idea of life" that is given in the *Philosophy of Nature*,<sup>124</sup> much less that which is the subject of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, *aesthetics*, or *ethical life*.<sup>125</sup>

If the *science* of the *Logic* is invalidated, the result is that the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Spirit* can have no more claim to necessity than any other pre-critical dogmatic metaphysics. However, if the status of the *Logic* and this final transition of purposiveness to the absolute idea is held carefully in view, then we are in a better place to understand the nature of Hegel's conclusion that "this individual is in the first place . . . fully determined within itself, the initiating self-moving *principle*."<sup>126</sup>

I have suggested reasons to be skeptical of accounts that collapse the distinction between the first two parts of Hegel's tripartite system when interpreting "purposiveness" as the final transition of the *Logic*. I have suggested instead that the strongest interpretation is that Hegel has in view a structural movement of, in Kant's terms, the free lawfulness of the imagination. This structure of thought serves as the final transition of the *Logic* to the idea of life, cognition, and the absolute. It is in this way that Hegel takes Kant's free lawfulness of the imagination to display the internal necessity and unity of discursive reason. This unity of reason is precisely a free-lawful movement and unity of freedom and necessity, an internal unity of the *a priori* and *a posteriori*, and so marks Kant's "greatest service to philosophy."<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *N* section 376.

<sup>125</sup> *WL* 12.181.

<sup>126</sup> *WL* 12.184.

<sup>127</sup> *WL* 12.157.

## *Imagination and Interpretation* *Herder's Concept of Einfühlung*

*Michael N. Forster*

Herder famously holds that *Einfühlung* – lit. “feeling oneself into,” or better, “feeling one’s way into” – plays an important role in interpretation. (He does not himself use the noun *Einfühlung* but instead the cognate verb *sich hinein fühlen in*.)<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, this position among other things implies that *imagination* plays an important role in interpretation.

### I

The locus classicus in Herder concerning the role of *Einfühlung* in interpretation can be found in *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (1774) and reads as follows:

No one in the world feels *the weakness of general characterizing* more than I. One paints a *whole* people, age, region of the earth – *whom* has one painted? One draws together peoples and periods of time *that follow one another* in an *eternal succession* like waves of the sea – *whom* has one painted?, *whom* has the depicting word captured? Finally, one after all draws them together into nothing but a *general word* in relation to which each person perhaps thinks and feels what he wants – imperfect *means of depiction*!, how one can be *misunderstood*!

Whoever has noticed what an *inexpressible thing* one is dealing with in the *distinctive individuality of a human being* – to be able to *say what distinguishes him in a distinguishing way*, how he feels and lives, how *different* and *idiosyncratic* all things become for him once *his* eye sees them, *his* soul measures them, *his* heart feels them – what *depth* lies in the character of just *a single nation* which, even if one has often enough perceived and stared at it, yet so *escapes the word*, and at least so rarely becomes recognizable *to everyone* in the word so that he understands and feels along – [for him] it is as though one were supposed to survey the

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this his similar use of such verbs as *sich zurück setzen in* and *sich versetzen in* (another time, country, or mode of thought). See e.g., S3:200, 373, 464; S32:113. [S = *Johann Gottfried Herder Sämtliche Werke*, ed. B. Suphan et al. (Berlin: Weidemann, 1877–).]

world-sea of whole peoples, ages, and lands, comprehend it in *one view, one feeling, one word!* Tired semi-phantom that a word is! The whole living painting of mode of life, habits, needs, peculiarities of land and climate, would have to *be added* or to have *preceded*; one would have first to *sympathize* [*sympathisieren*] with the nation, in order to feel a *single one* of its *inclinations* or *actions all together*, one would have to *find* a single word, to *imagine* everything in its fullness – or one reads – *a word!*

We all believe that we still now have *paternal* and *household* and *human drives* as the Oriental had them; that we can have *faithfulness* and *diligence in art* as the Egyptian possessed them; *Phoenician activeness*, *Greek love of freedom*, *Roman strength of soul* – who does not think that he feels a *disposition* for all that, if only *time, opportunity* . . . And behold!, my reader, we are precisely there. The most cowardly villain no doubt still has a remote *disposition and potential* for being the most great-hearted hero – but between those and “*the whole feeling of being, of existence, in such a character*” – a gulf! Hence even if you lacked nothing but *time, opportunity* to change your dispositions for being an Oriental, a Greek, a Roman, into *finished skills and solid drives* – a gulf! Drives and finished skills are all that is in question. *The whole nature* of the soul, which *rules* through everything, which *models* all other inclinations and forces of the soul *in accordance with itself*, and in addition *colors* even the most indifferent actions – in order to share in feeling this, do not answer on the basis of the word but go into the age, into the clime, the whole history, feel your way into everything [*fühle dich in alles hinein*] – only now are you on the way towards understanding the word.<sup>2</sup>

It seems clear that Herder is here proposing that the way to bridge the radical mental difference that occurs between different historical periods, cultures, and even individuals in interpretation is by means of *Einfühlung*: “feeling oneself into” or “feeling one’s way into” them. But what exactly does such a proposal *mean*?

It has often been thought – for example, by Friedrich Meinecke – that it means that the interpreter should perform some sort of psychological self-projection onto texts.<sup>3</sup> Herder does occasionally use the verb *sich hineinfühlen in* in such a sense. For example, near the start of *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* (1778) he traces such physical phenomena as force, mass, and inertia back to psychological self-projection and concludes: “The sensing human being feels his way into everything,

<sup>2</sup> Herder: *Philosophical Writings* (henceforth abbreviated as HPW), ed. M. N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 291–2.

<sup>3</sup> F. Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1st ed. 1936; 2nd ed. Munich: Leibniz Verlag, 1946), p. 401: “How was . . . an understanding of the Other possible? For the young Herder all understanding of the Other flowed from the understanding of oneself.”

feels everything from out of himself, and imprints it with his image, his impress.”<sup>4</sup> And he probably does mean to include such an idea as a component of his conception of *Einfühlung* in the context of interpretation as well. Hence, near the start of the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), he argues that the working of human language, and indeed also of animal languages, presupposes a certain nature common to the species and a certain natural sympathy among its members.<sup>5</sup> And, in *Sculpture* (1778), he argues that the interpretation of sculpture requires a sort of sympathetic self-projection into a work: “The more a limb means what it *should* mean, the more beautiful it is, and only inner *sympathy*, i.e., *feeling* and *projection of our whole human self* into the felt-through form is our teacher of, and grip on, beauty.”<sup>6</sup> However, this is pretty clearly not his *main* idea when he uses the term in connection with interpretation, as he does in *This Too a Philosophy of History*, for example. For to make it so would amount to recommending just the sort of false assimilation of the thought in a text to the interpreter’s own that Herder is there above all concerned to *avoid*.<sup>7</sup> So what *is* his main idea?

As can be seen from the long passage that I recently quoted from *This Too a Philosophy of History*, what he instead mainly has in mind is something more like an arduous process of historical-philological inquiry (the translation “feeling one’s way into” therefore arguably turns out to be better than “feeling oneself into”). But what more precisely is the cash value of the metaphor of *Einfühlung*?

If one reads the passage carefully in its context, one can see that this cash value is in fact rather complex, comprising several distinguishable ideas that are quite diverse in nature. In particular, the following five ideas can be distinguished. First, the metaphor implies a fundamental point that Herder emphasizes throughout *This Too a Philosophy of History*: the interpreter typically faces a radical mental “gulf” or difference – i.e., a radical difference in concepts, beliefs, values, sensations, and so on – between his own mentality and that of the person or people whom he is interpreting, making interpretation a difficult and laborious task (it implies that there is, as it were, an “in” there that he must carefully and laboriously

<sup>4</sup> HPW, pp. 187–8; cf. p. 214.      <sup>5</sup> HPW, pp. 65–8.

<sup>6</sup> G4:297. [G = *Johann Gottfried Herder Werke*, ed. U. Gaier et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–).]

<sup>7</sup> Meinecke’s (mis)interpretation was probably encouraged not only by passages such as those cited here but also by a certain re-use of the term *Einfühlung* that occurred shortly before he was writing in works such as F. T. Vischer, *Das Symbol* (1887) and T. Lipps, *Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst* (1906) in which it again meant a sort of psychological self-projection.



“feel his way into”). Second, the metaphor also implies, more specifically, that the “feeling one’s way into” in question must include thorough research, not only into a text’s use of language – which is something that Herder’s official equation of concept or meaning with word-usage in his philosophy of language makes essential –<sup>8</sup> but also into its historical, geographical, social, etc., context (“go into the age, into the clime, the whole history, feel your way into everything – only now are you on the way towards understanding the word”). Third, the metaphor also implies a thesis – based on a quasi-empiricist theory of concepts or meanings that forms another central part of Herder’s philosophy of language, i.e., a theory to the effect that concepts or meanings are always of their very nature rooted in perceptual or affective sensations –<sup>9</sup> that in order to understand an interpreted subject’s language the interpreter needs to achieve some sort of imaginative grasp of the interpreted subject’s relevant (perceptual and affective) sensations. Fourth, the metaphor also implies that hostility in an interpreter toward the person or people whom he is interpreting will tend to distort his interpretation of them and should, therefore, be avoided (“one would first have to *sympathize* with the nation”).<sup>10</sup> Herder in *This Too a Philosophy of History* also warns against excessive *identification* with them for similar reasons, though: “When the spirit of exaggerated reverence [for the Greeks and Romans] will have been blunted, the factionalism with which each person *cuddles his* people . . . sufficiently brought into balance – you *Greeks* and *Romans*, then we will know you and classify you!”<sup>11</sup> His ideal here might therefore, in the end, best be characterized as one of a certain sort of open-mindedness. Accordingly, he already writes in *On the Divinity and Use of the Bible* (1768) concerning the proper way to approach interpreting the Bible: “I do not yet love anything nor want to love anything, I do not bring any opinion arrived at in advance nor, still worse, any prejudice of the heart . . . in order not to see though my vision is sound and to harden myself despite having a feeling heart.”<sup>12</sup> Fifth and finally, the metaphor also implies that the interpreter should strive to develop his grasp of linguistic usage, contextual facts, and relevant sensations to the point where this attains something like

<sup>8</sup> Concerning this equation, see M. N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and M. N. Forster, “Herder’s Doctrine of Meaning as Use,” in *Linguistic Content: New Essays on the History of Philosophy of Language*, eds. M. Cameron and R. J. Stainton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 201–22.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning this quasi-empiricist theory of concepts, see Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition*.

<sup>10</sup> Compare S8:200: “sich in andere hinein zu lieben.”

<sup>11</sup> HPW, p. 341.

<sup>12</sup> G9/1:41.

the same sort of immediacy and automaticness that it had for the text's original author and audience when *they* understood the text in light of such things (so that it acquires for him, as it had for them, the phenomenology more of a *feeling* than of a cognition). In this spirit, Herder already concludes a passage from *On the First Documents of the Human Species* (1769) about interpreting the outlook of the ancient Hebrews in all its complexity with the following remark: "May one become an Oriental, an ancient Hebrew, in order to feel [*fühlen*] all that!"<sup>13</sup> And in the *Critical Forests* (1769) he writes, similarly, that instead of getting bogged down in an accumulation of parallel passages, learned notes, and so on, the interpreter should make it his goal to grasp the whole text with an "eagle's glance," "the noble . . . sense that casts aside all foreign plunder and rushes to embrace the naked whole image of an author's mind . . . a whole of feeling [*Empfindung*]." <sup>14</sup>

In my view, all of these ideas are defensible and important. To begin with the first and last pairs (reserving the third idea for later): The first idea, concerning radical mental difference and the resulting difficulty of interpretation, is a fundamental insight of Herder's that overturned the usual mental universalism of the Enlightenment (represented for Herder in *This Too a Philosophy of History* mainly by Hume and Voltaire) and thereby led to a revolution in the theory of interpretation, as well as in such related disciplines as translation theory and linguistics. This insight has been the indispensable foundation for all significant achievements in these disciplines subsequently (even if attempts have sometimes been made to reverse it, especially in the Anglophone world).

The second idea, concerning the need in interpretation to take the historical, geographical, social, etc., *context* of a text into account when interpreting it, had already been established shortly before Herder by German theorists of (biblical) interpretation such as Ernesti, Semler, and Michaelis and has continued to be an essential part of any serious theory of interpretation ever since (even if, again, attempts have sometimes been made to overturn it, e.g., by the New Critics).

The fourth idea, that it is important for an interpreter to avoid hostility to the person or people whom he is interpreting if he is to interpret them accurately, also seems very plausible and sensible, especially when complemented with Herder's warning against the opposite vice of identifying too closely with them.

<sup>13</sup> G5:62.      <sup>14</sup> S3:351–60.

And the fifth idea, to the effect that the interpreter should aim to grasp linguistic usage, context, and relevant sensations in an immediate, automatic way, as the author and his audience originally did, while it is by no means uncontroversial (for example, it stands in a certain tension with Schleiermacher's famous principle that the interpreter should aim to understand the author "better than he understood himself"), again seems defensible and attractive.

However, it is the third idea – the idea, based on Herder's quasi-empiricist theory of concepts or meanings, that in order to understand an interpreted subject's language the interpreter needs to achieve some sort of imaginative grasp of his relevant (perceptual and affective) sensations – that is perhaps the most salient component of Herder's conception of *Einfühlung* and that also stands in the greatest need of explanation and defense. So, in the remainder of this chapter, I would like to focus on this idea in particular.

## II

Aristotle already implied something roughly similar to this idea when he wrote, in a famous passage of *De Interpretatione*:

Spoken words are the symbols of mental experiences and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as are also those things of which our experiences are the images.<sup>15</sup>

However, Herder's position differs from Aristotle's in at least three important and attractive respects: First, whereas Aristotle strongly privileged vision over the other senses as a source of the perceptual sensations he had in mind,<sup>16</sup> Herder does not.<sup>17</sup> Second, whereas Aristotle restricted his thesis to perceptual sensations, Herder also includes affective ones (notice that the verb *fühlen* and its cognates can readily cover both cases).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 16a. <sup>16</sup> Compare *De Anima*, 429a.

<sup>17</sup> See esp. *On the Cognition and Sensation* at HPW, p. 204. This move is closely connected with Herder's tendency, in contrast with other thinkers, to demote vision in importance relative to the other senses, especially hearing (see e.g., *Treatise on the Origin of Language* at HPW, pp. 97–9, 106–11) and feeling or touch (see e.g., *Treatise on the Origin of Language* at HPW, pp. 106–8, 113–14; also *On the Sense of Feeling* (1769), *Critical Forests*, bk. 4, and *Sculpture*).

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in the *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, Herder holds that it is part of our original animal nature to fuse perceptual sensation with affective sensation (albeit that, in a way, as human beings, we manage to abstract the former from the latter by means of language/reflection). See HPW, pp. 88–9, 101–3, 137–8. Similarly, in *On the Cognition and Sensation* he holds that the only healthy

Third, whereas Aristotle believed that people's relevant sensations are basically the same at all times and places, Herder believes that both perceptual and affective sensations vary markedly in their character between different historical periods and cultures, and indeed even between different individuals within a single period and culture.<sup>19</sup> This makes the interpreter's task in this area far more challenging than Aristotle supposed it to be.

Herder's commitment to the importance of the sort of *Einfühlung* in question for interpretation emerges in many passages of his works. He especially emphasizes it in connection with the interpretation of other historical periods and cultures. This is his main focus in the long passage that I quoted from *This Too a Philosophy of History*. He also touches on it in the 1775 draft of *On the Cognition and Sensation*, where he writes (in a way that brings out its roots in his quasi-empiricist theory of concepts in the philosophy of language):

How different is the world in which the Arab and the Greenlander, the soft Indian and the rock-hard Eskimo, live! How different their civilization, food, education, the first impression that they receive, their inner structure of sensation! And on this structure rests the structure of their thoughts, and the offprint of both, their language.<sup>20</sup>

Accordingly, concerning *perceptual* sensation specifically, he already argues in the *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1767–8) that in order really to understand the Greeks we need to learn to see like them.<sup>21</sup> And concerning *affective* sensation specifically, he already argues in *On the First Documents of the Human Species* that because people's concepts of happiness and pleasure are always based on their distinctive "temperament," "feeling nature," and "sense for rapture," in order really to understand the ancient Orientals' versions of those concepts we need to recapture these affective states of theirs in our imagination.<sup>22</sup> In this connection he enjoins more vividly: "Let one only transpose oneself into the whole nature of the Orientals, feel their inclination to live in the free, great Creation, to interact with trees, plants, and animals, to be a ruling god in meadows and over the creatures of the field, and then to enjoy his bliss in peace in the bosom of beautiful Nature, in the lap of the voluptuous Earth."<sup>23</sup>

However, Herder also considers the relevant sort of *Einfühlung* to be essential for the interpretation of *individual* authors, whether or not

state for a human soul is one in which cognition includes affect, that any attempt to abstract cognition from affect amounts to a sort of pathology. See HPW, pp. 226–9.

<sup>19</sup> See HPW, pp. 114–15, 203–5, 217–23, 249–53, 291; also, G1:68–72, 80–4 and G6:286 ff.

<sup>20</sup> HPW, p. 220. <sup>21</sup> G1:559. <sup>22</sup> G5:74–5. <sup>23</sup> G5:75.

they are historically or culturally distant from the interpreter. He already implies such a position in the first few sentences of the long passage from *This Too a Philosophy of History* that I quoted earlier. And he champions it more explicitly in *On the Cognition and Sensation*. For example, in an early draft of the work from 1775 he writes:

Read in the spirit of the author and you see which senses ruled and which were subordinate in him, according to what rules he ordered and adjusted the chaos of his impressions, what images and sounds he clung to and made into guiding staffs of his thinking. The study of the human soul in this manner is the deepest means of education . . . Through a sort of inspiration and sympathy, we think, sense with him . . . This is living criticism, deep heuristics. Now for the first time do we understand what we are reading, feel it from its roots up to the shoot.<sup>24</sup>

And in a section of the published work from 1778 titled “Our thought depends on sensation” he writes similarly:

The deepest basis of our existence is individual, both in sensations and in thoughts . . . One ought to be able to regard every book as the offprint of a living human soul . . . The more modest wise man . . . seeks to read more in the spirit of the author than in the book . . . Every poem . . . is a . . . betrayer of its author . . . One sees in the poem not only, for instance . . . the man’s poetic talents, one also sees which senses and inclinations governed in him, by what paths and how he received images, how he ordered and adjusted them and the chaos of his impressions, the favorite sides of his heart . . . To be sure, not every soul from the gutter is worthy of such a study; but of a soul from the gutter one would also need no offprints, neither in writings nor in deeds. Where it is worth the effort, this *living reading*, this divination into the author’s soul, is the *only* reading, and the deepest means of education. It becomes a sort of enthusiasm, intimacy, and friendship which is often most instructive and pleasant for us where we do not think and feel in the same way . . . The more one knows the author from life and has lived with him, the livelier this intercourse becomes.<sup>25</sup>

Much of Herder’s own interpretive work focuses on just this task of recapturing the distinctive perceptual and affective sensations of a period, culture, or individual. An excellent example of this concerning periods and cultures is *This Too a Philosophy of History*. A good example of it concerning the individual is *On Thomas Abbt’s Writings* (1769).

The exact techniques that Herder advocates and employs in order to accomplish this task would merit a fuller investigation than can be

<sup>24</sup> HPW, pp. 217–18.

<sup>25</sup> HPW, pp. 217–18; cf. p. 291.

undertaken in this chapter. But one technique that is especially striking is the following. As can be seen both from the long passage from *This Too a Philosophy of History* that I quoted earlier and from Herder's actual practice when interpreting historical periods and cultures within the same work, he believes that it is necessary to employ a *holistic* approach: an approach that considers a historical period or culture's historical situation, distinctive environment, activities, artworks, values, statements, and so on together. In his view, this is an essential prerequisite for accurately identifying the nature of even a single one of its relevant sensations. He implies the need for a similar sort of holism when interpreting individuals too. Hence the concluding line of the passage recently quoted from *On the Cognition and Sensation*: "The more one knows the author from life and has lived with him, the livelier this intercourse becomes."

### III

Now, Herder's emphasis on the role of this sort of *Einfühlung* in interpretation is apt to sound misguided to modern philosophical ears at first hearing. One reason for this is the widespread acceptance in contemporary Anglophone philosophy of language of a certain anti-psychologism about meaning and understanding, i.e., precisely a *denial* that such things as sensations and images play any essential role in meaning or understanding.

However, anti-psychologism itself turns out to be a dubious doctrine on closer inspection. It was first introduced and made popular by Frege and Wittgenstein. Frege's version of it relied on a metaphysical Platonism about meanings (in his terminology, "senses" or "thoughts") and is for just this reason philosophically unattractive. By contrast, Wittgenstein advocated a more naturalistic version of anti-psychologism that equates meaning with word-usage (as Herder does) but that (unlike Herder) strictly limits the word-usage in question to external linguistic behavior, thereby denying sensations, images, and the like any essential role. The naturalism of this version of anti-psychologism certainly makes it more attractive than Frege's Platonist version. But is it right? In particular, is Wittgenstein's anti-psychologistic version of an equation of meaning with word-usage right or is Herder's psychologistic version of such an equation not perhaps better? This is a difficult question to answer, but I want to suggest that Herder's version *is* better.

Wittgenstein supports his anti-psychologism by means of arguments that aim to appeal to the criteria that we actually use for ascribing an understanding of concepts or meanings to people: he argues that what is

decisive here is always their linguistic competence, construed in narrowly behavioral terms, not whatever sensations, images, or other such psychological episodes they may happen to have. However, there are two sides to this case that need to be distinguished and that seem to me very different in their levels of plausibility: On the one hand, he argues that such linguistic competence is *necessary* for conceptual understanding – and this side of his case seems *very* plausible. But on the other hand, he also argues that it is (at least in a certain way) *sufficient* for conceptual understanding, in particular, that there is no need of such psychological episodes as having sensations or images in addition<sup>26</sup> – whereas this side of his case seems *much less* plausible.

Suppose, for example, that someone had never had any sensations of redness and could not generate any images of redness (say, because he was congenitally blind or color-blind), but that we nonetheless managed to teach him to make all of the right intralinguistic statements about redness – for instance, concerning its being a color, its position on the color spectrum, its phenomenological characteristics, and so on – and also, by implanting a fancy electronic device in his brain (say, one that caused an auditory buzzing in his head whenever he looked in the direction of something red), enabled him to apply the word “red” when and only when presented with something red. Would we in such a case want to say that he fully understood the word “red”? It seems to me at least very plausible to say that we would *not*.

A similar thought-experiment leads to a similar conclusion when the sensations in question are affective ones rather than perceptual ones. For example, could someone who was entirely bereft of emotions all his life (like Spock in *Star Trek* but minus the mawkish lapses) be brought to a full understanding of words such as “love,” “hate,” and “anger” merely by being trained to make the same sorts of intralinguistic statements using them as the rest of us make and to apply them to particular cases of these emotions with equal competence? Arguably *not*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The qualification in parentheses “at least in a certain way” concerns certain subtleties in Wittgenstein’s concept of a “criterion,” which I shall not go into here. For some discussion of this concept, see M. N. Forster, *Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> For a somewhat more extended discussion of this whole topic, see Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition*, pp. 71–3, 135–7 and “Herder’s Doctrine of Meaning as Use,” pp. 218–20.

In short, despite its popularity in modern Anglophone philosophy of language, anti-psychologism is a dubious doctrine and should therefore not stand in the way of our accepting Herder's relevant conception of *Einfühlung*.

Another reason why that conception can easily seem misguided at first hearing is because it can sound as though Herder is making it a condition of understanding that the interpreter actually *share* the (perceptual and affective) feelings of the period, culture, or individual he interprets, which would have absurd, and potentially even dangerous, consequences. For example, it would imply that in order to understand Hitler's antisemitic effusions in *Mein Kampf* an interpreter needs to have antisemitic feelings himself.

However, Herder is not in fact committed to any such foolish view. Instead, his considered position is that a sort of imaginative recapturing of relevant sensations is possible that does not involve actually *having* or *having had* them and that it is only such an imaginative recapturing that is necessary for understanding. Thus, he already distinguishes between actually having feelings and merely imagining them in *On the Ode* (1764–5):

Since the narrow realm of real things has been greatly broadened with us through the sorcery of the imagination [*Einbildungskraft*], fantasy [*Phantasie*] often replaces *true* sensations . . . Instead of swimming in the whole current of the affect, we climb in: in the former case we merely *felt* our self, in the latter it already becomes an ideal *representation* [*Idealvorstellung*]; we already copy ourselves rather noticeably. – The imagination whose paintings still border on the natural affect is strongest.<sup>28</sup>

And accordingly, in *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782–3) he argues that the sort of feeling-one's-way-into the standpoint of David's psalms that is necessary in order to understand them does not require the interpreter actually to share David's hatreds and joys, and that this should not be his goal, but that his recapturing of David's feelings can and should instead take a different, imaginative form:

David had his affects and worries as a refugee and as a king. We are neither, and hence may neither curse enemies that we do not have nor exult over them as victors. But we must learn to understand and appreciate these feelings.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, in the *Critical Forests* he argues concerning the task of interpreting Greek art and its distinctively free moral attitude toward nakedness:

<sup>28</sup> G1:91; cf. 68–72, 90–1.

<sup>29</sup> G5:1194.



As little as I want to have these freedoms as a privilege of our time in place of a venerable German modesty . . . I do want . . . to step outside of my old epoch and consider the joys of Greek youth . . . and the naked beauty of Greek art and the philosophy of love of a Socrates as though I were putting myself back into the happy innocence of this world-youth and were rejuvenated to a Greek mode of feeling.<sup>30</sup>

I want to suggest that this position of Herder's is perfectly correct. For, *on the one hand*, it really does seem that some sort of recapturing of an author's sensations is necessary for interpretation. This is supported not only by Herder's quasi-empiricist theory of concepts or meanings but also by our general experience in interpretation. For it is surely a routine feature of reading and understanding literature that it essentially involves such a recapturing of sensations.<sup>31</sup> And this also seems to be essential to other sorts of interpretation. Compare, for example, the sort of purely external account of ancient Greek religion that one finds in a book such as Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion* with the sort of, by contrast, sensation- and image-rich account of it that one finds in Walter Otto's books on the subject.<sup>32</sup> Despite the extraordinary historical-philological sophistication and detail of Burkert's account, it seems that one only really comes to understand the ancient Greeks' religious conceptions when one complements such an account with an account more like Otto's. But *on the other hand*, it also seems true that one can achieve a sort of imaginative grasp of perceptual or affective sensations that, while it is more than a mere knowledge of them by description, is also less than a full-blooded possession of them; and it seems that this sort of imaginative grasp not only satisfies the requirement for interpretation that was just mentioned, but also does so while avoiding the sorts of absurdity and even danger that I referred to earlier.

#### IV

Moreover, I want to suggest that Herder's position provides a key for solving certain further significant problems concerning interpretation that have been raised by philosophers more recently. Let me give two examples.

<sup>30</sup> S3:298–9.

<sup>31</sup> In this spirit, Herder himself describes the process of reading literature (specifically, poems) as a matter of having a series of feelings (*Empfindungen*). See e.g., S3:224–5, 352. And, in his *Travel Journal* (1769), he writes: Reading literature “make the images of your imagination so eternal that you never lose them”; one should “read as though one oneself saw, felt, sensed, or applied” (S4:460).

<sup>32</sup> See especially Walter Otto's four books *Die Götter Griechenlands*, *Dionysos*, *Die Manen*, and *Die Musen*.

First, Gadamer (appropriating and historicizing a position of Heidegger's) has argued that understanding essentially rests on "pre-understanding," a system of pre-cognitive perspectives on and attitudes toward the world, but that pre-understanding varies historically, so that, because one is always restricted to one's own age's specific form of pre-understanding (or at least to a residue of it that still remains left over even after one has modified it in various ways), one could never exactly reproduce another age's understanding of its discourse.<sup>33</sup>

Now a Fregean-Wittgensteinian anti-psychologist would probably reject (Heidegger's and) Gadamer's very assumption here that understanding essentially rests on pre-understanding, on the ground that this amounts to a sort of psychologism. However, for reasons already mentioned, I think that one should be very skeptical about anti-psychologism itself, and that such a dismissal of Gadamer's problem would, therefore, be much too quick; in some form or other, the idea that understanding essentially rests on pre-understanding is probably correct.<sup>34</sup> Nor does it seem plausible to attempt to forestall Gadamer's problem by denying his thesis of the historical variability of forms of pre-understanding (and therefore of forms of understanding); this thesis seems right as well.

Instead, I want to suggest that a better way of forestalling Gadamer's skeptical conclusion that an exact understanding of historical Others is impossible lies in Herder's insight that we are capable of a type of imaginative access to another person's (perceptual and affective) sensations that falls short of being the sort of *committed possession* of sensations that usually underlies our understanding of our own concepts, but that is nonetheless sufficient to support understanding. If all pre-understanding that was capable of supporting understanding had to have the character of committed possession, then a version of Gadamer's skepticism would indeed be inevitable, since one cannot simultaneously be in committed possession of one's own form of pre-understanding and of different, incompatible forms of pre-understanding (for example, one cannot when perceiving trees both have one's own color experiences of them and the Greeks'; one cannot when insulted both have one's own emotional reactions to this and the Greeks'). But since a merely imaginative, non-committed sort

<sup>33</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Of course, Heidegger and Gadamer would be loath to equate pre-understanding with a subject's perceptual and affective sensations. They instead conceive it as something more "primordial" than either the subject-object distinction or the distinction between the theoretical and the practical. However, what is *plausible* in their position seems to me reasonably (re)cast in such terms.

of pre-understanding is sufficient to support understanding, Gadamer's skepticism can be avoided.<sup>35</sup>

Second, Anne Eaton has recently drawn attention to the following problem that arises in connection with interpreting works of art: Understanding such works often seems to require having affective sensations of a certain sort. But the affective sensations in question may in certain cases be morally reprehensible ones, so that the requirements of understanding and those of morality come into conflict. For example, it seems that Titian's *Rape of Europa* essentially expresses certain (by our lights) morally reprehensible feelings about rape that were typical of the period and culture to which Titian belonged, in particular, a certain sort of male erotic titillation at and disdain for the victim of rape, so that in order fully to understand the work one would need to participate in such feelings.<sup>36</sup>

How, if at all, is this problem to be solved? Here again, an anti-psychologist would probably see the solution as lying in his sharp separation of understanding from feeling. But, for reasons already mentioned, such a solution seems quite dubious on reflection.

<sup>35</sup> In qualifiedly endorsing Gadamer's notion of "pre-understanding" here, I mean to endorse his idea that it is a *necessary condition* of understanding, not the additional implication that the "pre- [Vor-]" sometimes seems to carry for him (though not for Heidegger) that it is something that takes place, or at least can take place, temporally *prior* to understanding. Herder's considered picture, which seems right to me, is that the sensations that support conceptual understanding are *interdependent* with it – that not only are the concepts in question essentially infused with the sensations in question but also *vice versa*.

This point should deter one from thinking of the type of imaginative, non-committed grasp of another person's sensations that I am describing here as a sort of *tool* for achieving understanding of the person's concepts, as though one could get hold of the tool first and then employ it to produce that result afterwards. The two things are too intimately connected to stand in such a relation, though the former remains a necessary condition of the latter.

That implication might sound disappointing at first hearing. But if so, then the same point also carries a happier consequence. The account given here naturally invites such questions (or perhaps, challenges) as the following: How can an imaginative grasp of a historical, cultural, or individual Other's different sensations be achieved? And how can it be ascertained to have taken place correctly rather than incorrectly? The point just made suggests at least part of an answer to such questions: The interpreter can be guided toward a correct grasp of the Other's sensations by determining the extra-sensational aspects of the Other's usage of words, and to that extent the Other's concepts – which, since they are internal to the character of the Other's sensations, at least constrain viable intuitions concerning the character of the Other's sensations. And one can judge the interpreter's intuitions for correctness or incorrectness by seeing whether the extra-sensational aspects of his associated usage of words match up with those of the historical, cultural, or individual Other whose sensations he is attempting to access, since their failure to do so will be enough to show that he has failed in the attempt (even if their success in doing so will not be enough to show that he has succeeded in it).

<sup>36</sup> A. W. Eaton, *Titian's "Rape of Europa": The Intersection of Ethics and Aesthetics* (University of Chicago doctoral dissertation, August 2003).

However, Herder's position makes a more plausible solution possible: What is required for understanding does indeed include recapturing feelings, but not necessarily in the form of actually *having* them, since an imaginative, non-committed recapturing of them is also possible and is sufficient to support understanding. And, unlike actually *having* an affective feeling, the imaginative, non-committed reproduction of it is motivationally inert, and therefore morally unproblematic. Herder's example, quoted earlier, of Greek art's moral attitude toward nakedness versus his own contrary moral attitude, and of the availability to him of a sort of imaginative entertaining of the former that does not conflict with his commitment to the latter, illustrates this solution.

## V

In conclusion, it seems to me that Herder's conception that *Einfühlung* plays an essential role in interpretation, once properly understood, turns out to be convincing and important in each of its different aspects, including, not least, the central and controversial aspect concerning sensations and imagination to the discussion of which I have devoted the greater part of this chapter.

# *Imagination, Divination, and Sympathy* *Schleiermacher and the Hermeneutics of the Second Person*

Kristin Gjesdal

Because the human species is the most perfect, each human being is  
 a particular individual

(*Ethics*, 208)

For generations of readers, Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* has set the agenda for philosophical hermeneutics.<sup>1</sup> In this work, Gadamer characterizes Friedrich Schleiermacher's philosophy of interpretation as a problematic metaphysics of the second person. He argues that Schleiermacher's turn to the second person, the Thou, leads to the twin ills of an objectivizing methodology and an aestheticizing turn to sympathetic imagination in understanding. Gadamer deems Schleiermacher's hermeneutics a historically significant, yet philosophically flawed, contribution. In Gadamer's view, Schleiermacher, in turning toward the Thou, postulates a hermeneutic abyss between the first and the second person. In order to overcome this abyss – in order to account for the possibility of understanding – he is forced to endorse the problematic combination of a formalistic commitment to hermeneutic rules and an aesthetic effort to breathe life into methodologically objectivized expressions by way of a sympathetic-imaginative divination.<sup>2</sup> Gadamer traces this way of thinking back to a romantic misreading of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (TM 188).

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I quote from Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1994), 190–1. Further references to this work will be abbreviated TM, followed by page number.

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term “sympathetic-imaginative” from Anik Waldow's *Experience Embodied: Early Modern Accounts of the Human Place in Nature* (forthcoming with Oxford University Press), which covers the connection between Hume and Herder in particular. For a co-reading of Herder's notion of sympathy and Schleiermacher's notion of imagination, see Gunter Scholtz, “Schleiermacher im Kontext der neuzeitlichen Hermeneutik-Entwicklung,” in Andreas Arndt and Jörg Dierken (eds.), *Friedrich Schleiermachers Hermeneutik. Interpretationen und Perspektiven* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 1–27. While I treat sympathy and imagination jointly here, I do not rule out that there may be tensions between these two concepts as presented in Herder's and Schleiermacher's works and important nuances between the two philosophers' treatment of the terms.

As an alternative to what he views as an obstructive, romantic cult of congeniality, Gadamer suggests a model that casts the interpretative I – Thou relationship as a foundational issue in hermeneutics but nonetheless views the I and the Thou as rooted in a shared tradition. Tradition, he argues, is constitutively prior to the problem of the Thou and, in this sense, binds the I and the Thou together. The first-person plural – the we – is given primacy and hermeneutics is cast as an effort to bring the third person plural, the They (with Heidegger), back into a historically derived experience of belonging. On this model, there is no original gap between the I and the Thou: Any sense of alterity is derived and can be overcome by reference to a deeper commonality. There is, in other words, no need for sympathetic imagination in understanding. Understanding, instead, is a matter of retrieving and further cultivating a common ground.<sup>3</sup>

Gadamer's criticism of Schleiermacher has not stood unchallenged. Over the past decades, scholars have sought to demonstrate that Schleiermacher is indeed much closer to Gadamer than Gadamer initially thought (Heinz Kimmerle).<sup>4</sup> Others have wanted to maintain the opposition between romantic and Gadamerian hermeneutics while all the same overturning Gadamer's negative judgment of romantic philosophy by emphasizing its proto-modernist focus on style and linguistic individuality (Peter Szondi and Manfred Frank).<sup>5</sup> High-quality work has also been done on the ethical background of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.<sup>6</sup> More recently, scholars have sought to rescue Schleiermacher's philosophy of interpretation by seeing it as opening for a significant affinity between the human and natural sciences.<sup>7</sup>

I am sympathetic to the idea that romantic hermeneutics plots a philosophical alternative to the space carved out by Gadamer and the post-Heideggerian turn to ontology. Moreover, I am supportive of the effort to diversify the field of hermeneutics, i.e., the effort to see it as a set

<sup>3</sup> This is a central point throughout *Truth and Method*, but discussed particularly with reference to Schleiermacher and Hegel in TM 164–9.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik. Nach den Handschriften*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1974), editor's introduction (9–24).

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Szondi, *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Martha Woodmansee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 109–35 (on Schleiermacher) and Manfred Frank, *Das individuelle Allgemeine* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Gunter Scholtz, *Ethik und Hermeneutik. Schleiermachers Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> See, again, Gunter Scholtz, "Schleiermacher im Kontext der neuzeitlichen Hermeneutik-Entwicklung" and, with a somewhat different focus, Andreas Arndt, "Hermeneutik und Einbildungskraft" in *Friedrich Schleiermachers Hermeneutik*, 119–29.

of competing positions rather than a teleological development in which one position either rules out or dialectically sublates another. Nonetheless, I fear that for all the efforts to get beyond Gadamer's criticism – and I do not exclude my own *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism*<sup>8</sup> – the attempts to rehabilitate Schleiermacher's hermeneutics remain stuck with the basic premise of Gadamer's model. Namely, while seeking to offer a defense of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, they nonetheless retain the Gadamerian premise that *if* Schleiermacher's hermeneutics revolves around a notion of the Thou, *then* it cannot be defended. As a consequence, they endeavor to rehabilitate Schleiermacher's work by defusing his notion of the Thou and, relatedly, his infamous couplet of hermeneutic methodology and sympathetic-imaginative divination. What is missing is a will to ask if Gadamer may indeed be right in seeing Schleiermacher's emphasis on the irreducibility of the second person as entirely crucial to his work, even though his (Gadamer's) particular interpretation of this point as a misguided, romantic Kantianism may be polemical, incomplete, or even plain wrong.

It is this line of thought that I would like to pursue in the present chapter. I do so by, first, seeking to reconstruct what I take to be the philosophical foundations of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. I then survey the notions of hermeneutic methodology and sympathetic-imaginative interpretation. Finally, I propose that Schleiermacher's call for a sympathetic-imaginative orientation toward the Thou should not, as Gadamer assumes, be traced back to Kant's third Critique, but, rather, to Johann Gottfried Herder and the broader reception of empiricist impulses in philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century. In his polemical reading of Schleiermacher, Gadamer glosses over a fundamental schism, within the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, between, on the one hand, models that focus on the second person (Schleiermacher, parts of Wilhelm Dilthey's work, Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein),<sup>9</sup> and, on the other, tradition- and community-oriented models that develop in the wake of Hegel and Heidegger. Whereas the latter view the appeal to imagination as an expression of faltered subjectivism, the former ascribe to sympathetic imagination an entirely central role in hermeneutics.

<sup>8</sup> Kristin Gjesdal, *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. ch. 5 and 6.

<sup>9</sup> A similar argument is found in Schleiermacher and the early work of Johann Gottfried Herder, to whom I return in the final section of this chapter.

## I. The Thou in Question

There are no finished, book-length works or treatises from Schleiermacher's hand on the subject of interpretation.<sup>10</sup> Schleiermacher is a philosopher whose position is often developed in lecture form. Hence, it should not surprise us that much of Schleiermacher's work, including his hermeneutics, has been handed down as speeches and lecture notes (his own or those of his students). The hermeneutics lectures are published in several editions. There is the Friedrich Lücke edition, on which Gadamer (and, before him, Dilthey) based his reading. In 1959, Heinz Kimmerle, Gadamer's former student, published an edition that sought to redate the manuscripts so as to demonstrate that Schleiermacher initially defends a hermeneutics of tradition and social norms, but later moves toward the metaphysics of the Thou that Gadamer criticizes in *Truth and Method*.<sup>11</sup> Manfred Frank's 1977 edition then combines the Lücke notes with relevant sections from the *Dialectics* and brings Schleiermacher closer to more standard readings of German Idealism and its orientation toward the problem of self-consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Finally, there is the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, which includes Schleiermacher's finished lectures.<sup>13</sup> In this chapter, my quotes will be from Andrew Bowie's translation, *Hermeneutic and Criticism*, which is largely based on Frank's edition.<sup>14</sup>

Schleiermacher starts lecturing on hermeneutics in 1805. At this point, he has published *Speeches on Religion* and his work on social conduct (both from 1799), his Plato translations (1804 onwards), and a host of other works, including a passionate defense of his friend and working partner

<sup>10</sup> As it is, Schleiermacher did not complete and publish many works (*On Religion* was first published anonymously). For this point, see Andreas Arndt, "Schleiermacher (1768–1834)" in Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 26–45, at 27.

<sup>11</sup> Kimmerle, *Hermeneutik*. Kimmerle's dating of the manuscript, as it follows Dilthey's outline, has been later proven wrong. Wolfgang Virmond has shown that sections of the manuscript that Kimmerle locates to the late period actually belong to the early years. This undermines the claim that we can trace a development in Schleiermacher's work from non-psychological to psychological hermeneutics. See Wolfgang Virmond, "Neue Textgrundlagen zu Schleiermachers früher Hermeneutik. Prolegomena zur kritischen Edition," in *Schleiermacher-Archiv*, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 575–90, see in particular 578–81.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> See Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980–) vols. II/4 and I/11. His 1809/1910 lecture is published in Wolfgang Virmond, ed., *Internationaler Schleiermacher-Kongress, Berlin 1984* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 1269–310.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, ed. and trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Further references to this work will be abbreviated HC, followed by page number.



Friedrich Schlegel's free-spirited novel *Lucinde* (1800).<sup>15</sup> In this period, Schleiermacher also contributes to ethics, epistemology, and philosophy of education.<sup>16</sup>

In his reflections on interpretation, Schleiermacher positions himself within what he sees as a wide-ranging, academic field. He cites Ast and Wolf as his forerunners (HC 4). However, in his view, these scholars were limited in their scope. In each case, Schleiermacher suggests, they had sought to develop a model that covers a special area (e.g., the Bible, ancient Greek texts). His focus, we learn, will be unapologetically different – and it will be unapologetically philosophical.<sup>17</sup> At the center of his hermeneutics is a turn from *hermeneutica specialis* to *hermeneutica generalis*.<sup>18</sup> It will cover the area of language use in its totality.

Schleiermacher insists that language is, fundamentally, historical. It develops over time and by individual usage. As a result, philosophers must arrive at a (general) notion of language “via the understanding of [particular] human discourse” (HC 228). Hermeneutics, in turn, should not be limited to the understanding of foreign or historical texts, nor to scholarly contexts only. It should cover *all* human discourse, all language use, including that (or those) of the interpreter's language and life-world context.

What makes understanding philosophically interesting is, for Schleiermacher, first and foremost the fact that we seek to understand the meaningful expression of a second person – be it an other that is close or distant to us. In our everyday encounters, we relate to individualized others all the time. Hermeneutics, though, is a reflective and critical practice; it is

<sup>15</sup> Schleiermacher's legacy as a Plato scholar and classicist is nicely accounted for in Constanze Güthenke, *Feeling and Philology: Understanding Antiquity in German Classical Scholarship, 1790–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). For a helpful overview of Schleiermacher as an interpreter of Plato, see Julia A. Lamm, “The Art of Interpreting Plato,” in Jacqueline Mariña, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91–108.

<sup>16</sup> This is important with respect to his work with Humboldt in Berlin. For Schleiermacher's philosophy of education, see, for example, Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 140–69.

<sup>17</sup> Schleiermacher characterizes special hermeneutics as “a less strict scientific form” and leads this back to its “empirical part,” which, in turn, threatens to reduce it to “a mass of observation” (HC 268/1809–10).

<sup>18</sup> While Schleiermacher takes the honor for this expansion, we find a similar focus in Spinoza and others. For an overview of Schleiermacher's Spinozism, see Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2004), esp. 13–95. For an overview of the Enlightenment versions of this concept, see Axel Bühler's discussion in his introduction to Georg Friedrich Meier, *Versuch einer allgemeinen Auslegungskunst*, ed. Axel Bühler and Luigi Cataldi Madonna (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), vii–cii.

a discipline through which we take seriously the gap between the first and the second person and, as a result, acknowledge the inherent opacity of the expressions of others. We do not, in hermeneutics, primarily address a truth-claim (this is the domain of dialectics).<sup>19</sup> Instead we ask how an expression voices the unique and particular experiences of a second person – a Thou.

The potential impenetrability of second person utterances does not entail that we do not understand others at all. We communicate with others – and often do so in a perfectly reasonable manner – all the time. However, most of our everyday communication does not take seriously the otherness of the second person: her constitutive individuality. Individuality, however, is not hidden or metaphysically postulated. It is related to our bodily existence in the world and, as a topic of hermeneutic work, it is expressed in text and speech.<sup>20</sup> Being co-extensive with the area of language, hermeneutics thus offers a set of systematic reflections on the interrelation between individuality and universality.

The universal aspects of language consist of grammar and semantics. These shared resources, however, are only brought into a communicative context as applied. Each and every one of us inhabits a particular place in the world and develops a particular outlook on it. Each and every one of us, further, uses language in a unique way and this way is, in turn, expressive of our singular position in the world. The differences need not be large, but the nuances are there. Moreover, we sometimes intend to say either more, less, or something slightly different than what is conveyed by the conventional meaning of our words. Thus, even everyday exchanges – Schleiermacher gives the examples of conversations about the weather (HC 13) – can give rise to misunderstanding. This, Schleiermacher insists, can be assumed without supposing there is a fault on behalf of the speaker (HC 227). Across its range of applications, language not only enables communication, but it also has an indeterminacy of meaning that cannot

<sup>19</sup> Gadamer recognizes the distinction between hermeneutics and dialectics and the division of labor between them in TM 185. For a discussion of criticism, as situated between dialectics and criticism, see Christian Berner, “Zwischen Hermeneutik und Dialektik,” in Hans Dierkes, Terrence N. Tice, and Wolfgang Virmond (eds.), *Schleiermacher, Romanticism, and the Critical Arts: A Festschrift in Honor of Hermann Patsch* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 169–87.

<sup>20</sup> Schleiermacher's reflections on embodied existence and individuality are clearly spelled out in his *Notes on Ethics* (1805/1806), trans. Terrence N. Nice (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). I have also benefited from Jacqueline Mariña's treatment of this point in her *The Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 1, 2, and 6. Edith Stein, who explicitly references Dilthey, further develops this point in *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989).

be erased. Schleiermacher speaks of this as an “ambiguity of the content” and connects this back to the inherent opacity of second person utterances. From this point of view, the possibility of non-understanding is inherent in human communication (HC 227), and this potential non-understanding is, in turn, led back to the Thou.

Once the second person, the concrete Thou, stands forth as a hermeneutic challenge, the difference between mother tongue and foreign language is secondary. The same applies to temporal distance. For Schleiermacher, the irreducibility of the Thou is a most fundamental philosophical-hermeneutic question. It is a problem that is even more fundamental than, yet not unrelated to, historical and cultural variation.<sup>21</sup> In the hermeneutic encounter, an interpreter, as an I, faces an other, as a Thou. In acknowledging the Thou, the interpreting I assumes that its worldview and values, as mediated in language, can provide the resources needed to fully pay justice to the perspective of the second person.

The very same aspect of language – its indeterminacy; the constitutive openness of semantics and grammar – that enables self-expression also discloses a challenge to the interpreter. This, though, does not presuppose a metaphysical notion of an inaccessible, pre-linguistic dimension of individuality.<sup>22</sup> Schleiermacher’s point, rather, is that while an individual’s use of language draws on and reflects a larger cultural context, it cannot be reduced to it. There is also no language-use that is purely and solely individual (such that it transcends all shared linguistic resources).<sup>23</sup>

In this sense, Gadamer is, as I see it, right in seeing the Thou as key to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics. However, Gadamer is not, for that reason, right in seeing this as a quasi-metaphysical position, as a notion of understanding that is hidden, mysterious, or unmediated by tradition. Schleiermacher never claims that the second person is to be retrieved from behind

<sup>21</sup> This should not surprise us. Schleiermacher discusses plurality between and within cultures in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. the Fifth Speech (on the various religions).

<sup>22</sup> All that is presupposed in hermeneutics is language. The Thou encountered by the interpreter is linguistically mediated. When Schleiermacher addresses linguistic individuality under the rubric of “style,” style is not a narrow, aesthetic concept. It simply refers to the word-choices, grammar, tone, form, or sensitivity that characterizes the language use of a given individual, work, or genre. Style is individualized, but can also be shared by a group of individuals. Oftentimes, it is both. There is no language without style. Even scientific language, to the extent that it is used, will be marked by the language-user(s). Stronger still, language is the way in which human beings, across their various pursuits, express themselves as I’s – and, by the same token, stand forth as a Thou vis-à-vis other I’s.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Schleiermacher: “There is nothing purely objective in discourse; there is always the view of the utterer, thus something subjective, in it. There is nothing purely subjective, for it must after all be the influence of the object which highlights precisely this aspect” (HC 257).

or underneath language and tradition. It is, rather, that language and tradition are arenas that all the same enable and limit our expressive powers. From this point of view, the hermeneutic I-Thou relation cannot be reduced to a common, hermeneutic “we.”

## 2. Method Reconsidered

In his criticism of Schleiermacher, Gadamer not only worries about Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic turn to the Thou. He also finds Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics to be fueled by a bad, methodological consciousness (see, for example, TM 197). This is the point to which I turn next.

Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics is based on a distinction between naïve understanding and critical-reflective understanding. Naïve understanding is unreflective, but not, *per se*, wrong. It is the glue, as it were, of everyday interaction. Critical understanding, by contrast, proceeds on the grounds of a reflective grasp of the hermeneutic process. It presupposes a systematic awareness of what is going on – the goals and the challenges – in intersubjective communication across the board. To the extent that this very turn is motivated by the fact that human language is used (and thus marked by the individuality of the second person, the interlocutor in conversation or print), so does critical understanding proceed on the assumption that the risk of misunderstanding is ubiquitous. A Thou always presents itself with a certain obliqueness *and* a demand to be understood. As a result, a reflected interpreter does not passively seek to avoid misunderstanding. Instead, she actively proceeds on the assumption that understanding “must be desired and sought at every point” (HC 22). Or, with an alternative formulation: “The business of hermeneutics should not only begin where understanding is uncertain, but with the first beginning of the enterprise of wanting to understand” (HC 228). In this way, hermeneutics, as Schleiermacher sees it, does not lay out a procedure that ensures the desired result (correct understanding), but instead reflects on how language, as a symbolic medium, facilitates *and* limits communication and understanding. Taking this seriously is, in turn, likely to reduce the risk of misunderstanding.

Gadamer fears that Schleiermacher, through this gesture, universalizes misunderstanding (TM 185–6). However, Schleiermacher’s point is not that we, as speakers and interpreters, should *a priori* assume that we misunderstand others all the time. The thought, rather, is that *if* we want to proceed reflectively and hermeneutically – if we want to proceed with

hermeneutic care and awareness, critically rather than naïvely – *then* we must approach the other, keeping in mind, as an inherent possibility, the risk of misunderstanding. We must, in short, recognize that the text is always an expression of a Thou and that a Thou, by definition, is more than a projection of the I.

Just as language consists of shared semantic and grammatical resources and their individual application, so does understanding, for Schleiermacher, fork into an orientation toward shared and individualized elements. Schleiermacher speaks of the former as *grammatical interpretation*, the latter as *technical interpretation*. Sometimes, he replaces the term “technical interpretation” with “psychological” interpretation. In his work, however, “technical” mainly refers to that which is not rule-bound, to the parts of the interpretation that require *Fingerspitzengefühl* or a particular openness or sensitivity (*technê*, in the original sense of the term). Along similar lines, Schleiermacher defines grammatical interpretation by its focus on the speaker as she expresses herself through the shared resources of language. Technical interpretation, by contrast, homes in on language as it is applied in each particular instance.<sup>24</sup> In both cases, the intimate relationship between language and speaker remains at the center of hermeneutic reflection.<sup>25</sup> At stake is not two different kinds of interpretation, but two focal points of one and the same hermeneutic approach.

In each and every case, understanding requires attention to the technical as well as grammatical aspects of language. Indeed, each of these approaches is designed so as, ideally, to reach the same result as the other. However, as interpretation is hardly an ideal exercise – concrete practice will always be irregular and shaped by contingent factors – an interpreter benefits from moving back and forth between them. As Schleiermacher puts it, “understanding results when both operations complete each other; the image of the whole becomes more complete via the understanding of the particular, and the particular is more and more completely understood the more one gets an overall view of the whole” (HC 232, see also HC 229). Hence, the terms “technical” and “grammatical interpretation”

<sup>24</sup> Manfred Frank offers an overview of these two aspects of interpretation in *Das individuelle Allgemeine*, 266–73 and 313–33.

<sup>25</sup> “Grammatical. Understanding the utterance and compound aspects of the language. Technical. Understanding as representation of thoughts. Composed by a person. Thus also from out of the person. Grammatical. The person with their activity disappears and appears only as the organ of the language. Technical. The language with its determining power disappears and appears only as the organ of the person, in the service of their individuality, as in the former case their personality is in the service of the language” (HC 94).

designate two coherent, reflective responses to the structure of language as applied by an individual language user and thus as leaving room for self-expression, for an I presenting itself, as a Thou, to another I.

Gadamer, as I see it, is right in labeling this a methodological approach. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is, after all, an attempt to shape the interpreter's attitudes and procedures. He traces the validity of the hermeneutic approach back to the interpreter's stance vis-à-vis a text. Further, Gadamer is right to insist that, for Schleiermacher, the methodological commitments follow from orientation toward the Thou. He is, however, wrong to suggest that Schleiermacher's methodology is abstract and formalistic. All that is entailed here is an attempt to develop reflection on the hermeneutic procedure that is independent of the particular nature of the text or utterance at stake. Given the otherness of the second person, whose language the I seeks to understand, an interpreter cannot take for granted the access to the meaning-material at stake and should therefore not leap to conclusions about its nature. This, as I see it, is not a sign of scientific hubris, but of epistemic-ethical modesty.

### 3. Divination

Gadamer worries about the notion of immediacy in understanding (TM 191, 193). He claims that Schleiermacher, with his emphasis on (cold) methodology, is forced to hypostatize the notion of an accompanying, (warm) congenial re-experience, an imaginary reconstruction of the original experience to which the text gives voice. What, then, does Schleiermacher have to say about this issue?

In his hermeneutics lectures, Schleiermacher separates two planes of language use. An interpreter should approach language not only as shared, but also as expressive of individuality. As far as the shared aspects of language are concerned, Schleiermacher's reflective interpreter proceeds by way of comparison, by viewing a given expression in light of the communicative contexts and genres in which it occurs and asking how it participates in *and* transcends these practices. A comparative approach should in each case seek to illuminate what this particular expression has in common with other expressions (culturally, historically, and in terms of the text or its author[s]). In Schleiermacher's view, comparison, to an extent, brings us closer to understanding what distinguishes this particular utterance from other uses of language. However, comparison alone cannot get us a complete understanding of any particular case. Hence, an interpreter must also positively seek to grasp that which sets apart a particular

usage (utterance, text, or part of a text). The approach to the text in its irreducible individuality thus requires something more (or something other) than comparison – it requires an ability to see the text, as a totality, on its own premises. Schleiermacher addresses this as a matter of *divination*.<sup>26</sup>

Schleiermacher's discussion of divination takes up comparatively little space in his hermeneutics lectures. In the 1809/10 manuscript, the concept of divination does not figure at all. Here, Schleiermacher distinguishes between spirit (the manner of thought) and style (the manner of representation) and suggests that "everything individual in the person is connected and bears a common character" (HC 255). Yet, individuality cannot be retrieved by reference to universal rules alone. It also requires, as Schleiermacher puts it, that one "reproduces the principle for oneself" (HC 255). In order to achieve such a reproduction, Schleiermacher introduces the notion of an immediate method (HC 262). Unlike the reflective method, which drives comparison, the immediate method proceeds by way of *feeling*. Only the combination of comparison and feeling – as mediated in method – can aid our attempts at reaching "complete understanding," defined as "an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself" (HC 266).<sup>27</sup> This, Schleiermacher explains, is an attempt at grasping the aspects of language-use that were not consciously present to the author.<sup>28</sup> It is a totalizing hypothesis, a sympathetic-imaginative identification with the kind of experience or point of view of an other. Such an understanding, however, is typically not reached by an individual interpreter, but serves as a regulative idea for a community as such.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> On its own, comparison will lead to an infinite regress. In order to validate the comparing of two expressions, the reference to a common, third expression is needed. This comparison, too, needs to be validated, and so on. Divination puts an end to this in that it sees a particular language use as an organic expression of an I as it puts itself forward, as a hermeneutic Thou, through shared language. As Schleiermacher puts it, "[t]he universal and the particular must penetrate each other and this always only happens via divination" (HC 93).

<sup>27</sup> Gadamer traces this notion of understanding better than the author back to Kant's first Critique. However, the notion has a rich history and includes the work of Herder as well as Fichte and Schelling. For a helpful overview, see Sarah Schmidt, *Die Konstruktion des Endlichen. Schleiermachers Philosophie der Wechselwirkung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 249–52.

<sup>28</sup> Or, as Schleiermacher also puts it, "complete understanding grasped in its highest form is an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself. Partly because it is in fact an analysis of this procedure which brings to consciousness what was unconscious to himself, partly because it also conceives his relationship to language via the necessary duplication which he himself does not distinguish in it. In the same way he also does not distinguish what emerges from the essence of his individuality or his level of education from what coincidentally occurs and abnormality; and what he would not have produced if he had distinguished it" (HC 267).

<sup>29</sup> HC 267: "The totality of understanding is always a collective work." See also HC 93.

The notion of sympathetic imagination also appears in Schleiermacher's (few) direct references to divination in the 1819 manuscripts. Here, the discussion of divination occurs as part of an initial reflection on prejudice and the way in which prejudice, as it sits "deeper" in the interpreter, leads to a "preference for what is close to the [interpreted] individual's circle of ideas and the rejection of what lies outside of it" (HC 23). Seeking to overcome cultural prejudice in interpretation, Schleiermacher recommends that an interpreter "transforms [herself] into the other person and tr[ies] to understand the individual elements directly" (HC 92). Like comparison, divination is enabled by the fact that every individual has a "receptivity" for all other people (HC 93). For Schleiermacher, though, humanity is not conceived as an abstract universal or an overarching concept, but exists in and through myriad of perspectives to which we, when conditioned by the right approach, may have access in and through interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

Against this background, three important inferences can be made. Firstly, Schleiermacher's appeal to divination responds to the problem of prejudice and bias – a tendency to erase difference and judge on the basis of the values or outlook of the interpreter. Secondly, divination is enabled by shared humanity, though this humanity cannot be postulated, but must be realized in and through hermeneutical-ethical work.<sup>31</sup> And, thirdly, divination is not an extra-methodological, aesthetic approach. It is a key element of reflective (as opposed to naïve) hermeneutics. We can thus conclude that Gadamer is right in highlighting Schleiermacher's turn to divination. Yet he is wrong in that he reads this as a narrow, aesthetic, and aestheticizing congeniality.

#### 4. Imagination, Feeling, and the Hermeneutic Thou

At this point, it should be clear that the problem with Gadamer's influential reading of Schleiermacher is *not* that he emphasizes the centrality of the

<sup>30</sup> As Schleiermacher, in *On Religion*, rejects the notion of an eternal and unchangeable humanity: "Eternal humanity is unweariedly busy in creating and in representing itself in the most varied ways in the provisional appearance of finite life. What would be the point of the uniform repetition of a highest ideal whereby human beings, apart from time and circumstances, are after all actually identical, the same formula being merely combined with other coefficients? What would it be in comparison to this to this infinite variety of human appearances? Take whatever element of humanity you wish, and you will find each in every possible condition, from a nearly pure one – for nowhere will it be found completely pure – in every possible mixture with every other one." *On Religion*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> The quasi-Leibnizian ring of this claim is then fully brought out when Schleiermacher suggests that "everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themselves, and divination is consequently excited by comparison with oneself" (HC 93).



second person in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. The second person is central to Schleiermacher. Nor is the problem that Gadamer emphasizes methodology and divination. Again, they *are* central to Schleiermacher's concern. What we need to question, rather, is Gadamer's assumption that Schleiermacher's thought grows out of a problematic, Kantian subject-object model and, in particular, a turn toward aesthetic subjectivity as key to hermeneutic experience. But is this the kind of theoretical background that motivates Schleiermacher's hermeneutics? And, further, is this combination of alienation and aestheticizing – what Gadamer takes to be a romantic bastardization of the framework laid out across Kant's three critiques (TM 187) – really what is at stake here? In my view, it is not.<sup>32</sup>

As Dilthey pointed out in his 1860 study, Schleiermacher's hermeneutic commitments are not of a particularly Kantian origin.<sup>33</sup> Schleiermacher's work, rather, draws on a whole host of thinkers, including Herder and his anthropological turn in philosophy.<sup>34</sup> Hence, to understand Schleiermacher's commitment to the hermeneutic Thou, we need to muster, historically and systematically, a more inclusive way to think about hermeneutic alterity, methodology, and sympathetic imagination.

In his early years, Herder worked closely with Kant. They split ways, however, when Kant proceeded toward transcendental philosophy and

<sup>32</sup> Gadamer's criticism of Schleiermacher follows along the lines of Hegel's critique of romanticism. I am thinking of Hegel's critique of romanticism more broadly, and not his critique of Schleiermacher in particular. For discussions of Hegel's critique of romanticism, see Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (Bonn: Friedrich Wilhelms Universität, 1965 [Dissertation]) and Fred Rush, *Irony and Idealism: Rereading Schlegel, Hegel, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Frederick Beiser argues that Dilthey, in *Leben Schleiermachers*, wrongly suggests that Schleiermacher was a Kantian throughout his life. See Frederick Beiser, "Schleiermacher's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 53–73, p. 70, fn. 7. However, Dilthey also suggests that Schleiermacher was an important source of influence and that Herder, in turn, "came closer to true hermeneutics than anyone else before Schleiermacher." See Wilhelm Dilthey, "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics (1860)," trans. Theodore Nordenhaug, in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, ed. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 89.

<sup>34</sup> See Wilhelm Dilthey, "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutic System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics," 90. In particular, Dilthey leads this influence back to the notion of divination. He suggests that "when later combined with the constructive method in philosophy, this congenial sensitivity of Herder would become the basis for a sound method of interpretation and a genuinely scientific hermeneutics" (Ibid.). A more recent version of this argument can be found in Scholtz, though my reading deviates from his. Gunter Scholtz, "Schleiermacher im Kontext der neuzeitlichen Hermeneutik-Entwicklung," in *Friedrich Schleiermachers Hermeneutik*, 1–27. Scholtz, in this context, does not emphasize the relevance of the second person, but highlights the possibility of a softer transition, via the notion of an imaginative synthesis, between the human and the natural sciences.

Herder sought to develop a lineage of thought that stayed truer to the empiricist tradition.<sup>35</sup> For Herder, there is an intimate connection, a mutual dependency if not complete intertwinement, between imagination, sympathy, and understanding. The sympathetic-imaginative stance is not conceived of in terms of a transcendental, cognitive faculty. Nor is it – at least not in a narrow sense – aesthetically coined. And, most importantly, it is not a faculty that enters, post factum, to mend an I-Thou relationship that is already broken, alienated, or conceived in misleadingly abstract and objectivizing terms. Sympathy, the ability to see the world from the point of view of a concrete, actual Thou is instead viewed as part of the foundational bond that binds Is and Thous together, constituting a condition of possibility for the concrete historical “we” that Gadamer cannot find in Schleiermacher’s work.<sup>36</sup>

Schleiermacher, as we have seen, speaks about divination in the context of prejudices. He includes divination as a necessary aspect of a methodological approach. The reason why we need divination – why we need a basic receptivity or openness toward the expression of the Thou – is not that the expression of the other constitutively evades or is completely cut off from a shared background of tradition. Instead, it is the very background of tradition itself that, potentially, causes trouble: Tradition predisposes us to see others in a certain way. Whether we like it or not, it furnishes us with a framework of understanding and concepts by which we approach culturally or temporally distant expressions: *this*, we might think, is what antiquity is about, *this* is the basic outline of the Renaissance, *these* are the hermeneutic parameters of nineteenth-century philosophy, and so on. Such generalized approaches may well be necessary for a work to be minimally accessible or even interesting to us – let alone to be something we recognize as a potential object of interpretation.<sup>37</sup> They constitute, as it were, a naïve or pre-reflective hermeneutic backdrop. However, tradition is not, for that reason, sufficient for our understanding of the particular expression as such – as the expression of a second person, be it one that is

<sup>35</sup> What I have in mind here is not the empiricist tradition as such, but the empiricist tradition as it was imported to and modified in a German context. For a helpful study of this point, see Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> Again, Stein’s *On Empathy* comes to mind.

<sup>37</sup> Gadamer thus sees prejudices, handed down by tradition, as “biases of our openness to the world [and] conditions whereby we experience something, whereby what we encounter says something to us.” Gadamer, “The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem,” in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1977), 9.

distant or close to us in time and culture. Schleiermacher, in other words, need not deny that tradition discloses a world of meaning. In fact, he acknowledges that it does. His argument, rather, is that the disclosure of traditional meaning does not necessarily bring us closer to the second person – neither with respect to cultural context (if different from that of the interpreter), nor with respect to her unique and irreducible outlook. It might just as well make us more removed from her.

This insight features centrally in Herder, especially in his early work. Herder had developed this kind of thinking in his studies of the relationship between dominant and less dominant cultures and traditions. In his 1774 *This Too a Philosophy of History*, for example, he worries about how the modern European attempts at global dominance (politically and culturally) derive from an inherently self-centered tradition that tends to reduce the rest of the world to a projection of a European outlook.<sup>38</sup> As he sees it, though, this is not a weakness of European culture per se. Indeed, *all* culture is, potentially, self-oriented, myopic, and tends to take its values to constitute a general guideline or even universal norm. In a slightly earlier essay on taste, Herder notes how all cultures tend to project onto others their own taste and values (PW 247). If we, in this way, tend to generalize our values, oftentimes illegitimately, then a hermeneutic theory worthy of its name must be able to analyze the human mind and discuss what resources we have for overcoming this tendency to view the Thou through the lens of the I.

Upon publishing *This Too a Philosophy of History*, Herder had been exploring hermeneutic issues for a good decade. Like Schleiermacher, he wrote philosophy, but also had firsthand experience as an editor, translator, and critic. Of particular importance is an early essay on Thomas Abbt. Here Herder – appealing, precisely, to a faculty of *divination* – emphasizes the importance of sympathetic imagination for a reflective approach in hermeneutics. An interpreter, as he puts it, should try and capture the individuality of the author. This individuality, further, is and remains expressed in words and deeds (i.e., it is not inner) (PW 169). The procedure recommended for gleaning meaning from such expressions includes an essential component of co-feeling.<sup>39</sup> This capacity for feeling,

<sup>38</sup> See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), e.g., 276–9, 282–4, 307, 325–8. Further references to this work will be abbreviated PW, followed by page number.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Abbt is praised precisely because he “feels deeply” and senses “as through a divination” (HW 174).

further, is related to the faculty of imagination (PW 174).<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in “On Cognition and Sensation” (1775), Herder describes how “one ought to be able to regard every book as the offprint of a living human soul” (PW 217) and recommends a “living reading” and a “divination into the author’s soul” as the best way to understanding and *Bildung* (HW 218). Rather than abstract classificatory systems, the ability to sympathize with others (Herder’s contrast) should be the basis for understanding. In isolation, though, sympathetic imagination can go wrong. It needs to be combined with a reflected, critical-historical approach. Drawing on the resources of Hume and empiricist philosophy, but also on Leibniz and his insistence on irreducible individuality and monadic manifold,<sup>41</sup> Herder creates a hermeneutic synthesis of empiricism and rationalism that is clearly in dialogue with the early (so-called pre-critical) Kant, yet different from the outlook defended throughout Kant’s critical work.<sup>42</sup>

Gadamer overlooks the significance of Herder’s contribution to our understanding of Schleiermacher and early nineteenth-century hermeneutics.<sup>43</sup> But what is more worrisome than this historical point is how Gadamer’s reading has had a tendency to make us too comfortable in our placing early nineteenth-century hermeneutics within, as it were, a linear, post-Kantian movement, centering around a series of responses to the transcendental turn as it takes shape in the three Critiques and then, later, gets modified by Fichte. This movement, in turn, is taken to engage a wide

<sup>40</sup> Herder does not at this point distinguish between *Einbildungskraft* and *Phantasie*. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Günter Arnold et al., (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), vol. II, 605–6.

<sup>41</sup> In thinking about Hume’s importance for the hermeneutic tradition, I have benefited from reading Anik Waldow’s work in progress, as well as her *David Hume and the Problem of Other Minds* (London: Continuum, 2009).

For a discussion of Herder’s indebtedness to the rationalists, see Hans Adler, *Die Prägnanz des Dunklen. Gnoseologie, Ästhetik, Geschichtsphilosophie bei Johann Gottfried Herder* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), esp. ch. 1. See also Nigel DeSouza, “Leibniz in the Eighteenth Century: Herder’s Critical Reflections on the Principles of Nature and Grace,” *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol. 20, no. 4–2012, 773–95.

<sup>42</sup> In Schleiermacher’s case, divination is tied up with technical interpretation. Technique (as opposed to mechanical rule following) was also a central aspect of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Here it designates the mind’s ability, on the basis of the given, to anticipate the larger totality of which it is a part. As such, it is intrinsically related to teleological judgment. For Kant’s definition, see *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7 (First Introduction: 200). Herder conceives of divination in a similar way (but does not refer to the term “technical” at this point). For Kant’s possible indebtedness to Herder, see John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> At this point, I have a much more favorable view of Schleiermacher’s contribution (and his use of Herderian material) than the one found in Michael N. Forster, “Schleiermacher’s Hermeneutics,” *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 13 (1–2005), 100–22.

range of issues, including epistemic dualism, the status of self-consciousness and apperception, the divisions between understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*), and between theoretical and practical reason. We tend to forget that Kant's philosophy springs out of a rich and complex intellectual environment and that his contribution represents just one out of a series of attempts to combine the resources of empiricist commitment and rationalist intuitions.

Schleiermacher's work is positioned within this wider eighteenth- and nineteenth-century horizon. Like Herder's early work, it is characterized by an openness toward the Thou and a sense that each human being, each community or culture, represents a unique (quasi-monadological, we could say) perspective or dimension of human reasoning and understanding. This point of view is particularly evident in his early notes on ethics, but also his essay on social behavior.<sup>44</sup>

In "Essay on a Theory of Social Behavior," Schleiermacher describes how conventional culture tends to streamline deviating sub-cultures and erase individuality.<sup>45</sup> Against models that erase individual differences, Schleiermacher encourages a culture in which "all manifestations of humanity will become known, one after the other, and the most alien temperaments and relationships can also become familiar" (SB 154). While acknowledging that each individual is unique (SB 160), he still thinks there is a shared feeling for humanity – a general feeling, as he puts it, "found in the essence of human nature" (SB 156).

This feeling, in turn, feeds into the hermeneutic encounter. So conceived, the hermeneutic encounter involves a willingness to see the world from the point of view of the other: not the other as abstractly understood, but as a thinking, feeling, and imaginative human being living in a particular period and culture. As thinking, feeling, and imaginative beings, we have a basic sympathy with our fellow humans. We can imagine the position of another and see, as it were, the world from her point of view. Like Herder, Schleiermacher does not claim that this is easy (a complete interpretation can "only be reached by approximation [Annäherung]," as he puts it [HC 96]).

<sup>44</sup> It is, in my view, a mistake to detach Schleiermacher's hermeneutic work from the larger context of his philosophy of social life and religion – or to connect it, as Frank sometimes does, to his later contribution to the philosophy of religion, especially his theory of self-consciousness in *The Christian Faith*.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Foley, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Essay on a Theory of Social Behavior (1799)* (with the original text) (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 154. Further references to this work will be abbreviated SB, followed by page number.

When understood within the broader framework of late eighteenth-century philosophy, it is clear that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, with its turn toward the Thou, does not reject the relevance of intersubjectivity. His, rather, is a model that places a capacity for sympathy with others at its very center. The ability to imagine the point of view of an other, the second person, plays a central role in phenomenology and hermeneutic theory all the way to Husserl and Stein. Yet, it is somehow toned down (or even obscured) in Heidegger and Gadamer's later polemics against what they perceive as aestheticism and quasi-scientific approaches to understanding.

### 5. Concluding Thoughts

Against Gadamer's critics, I have maintained that Gadamer is indeed right in characterizing Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a philosophy of the Thou. He is, further, right in pointing out that this is a model that emphasizes methodology and that has, at its very heart, a notion of sympathetic-imaginative divination. Gadamer is wrong, though, in that his reading presents an inadequate and polemical image of late enlightenment and early romantic philosophy. Further, he follows – too passively – the Hegelian-Heideggerian assumption that any model that does not proceed from the individual's situatedness within a collective (a “being-with,” as Heidegger puts it) is bound to end up with a problematic subject-object model that only phenomenology, Hegelian or Heideggerian, can fully overcome.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Gadamer's approach to the history of hermeneutics demonstrates the weakness of a model that is oriented primarily toward the disclosure of traditional meaning. In emphasizing an alternative aspect of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century hermeneutics, I have sought to corroborate the historical and systematical sophistication of Schleiermacher's position. Moreover, I have indicated the complexity – the historical roots and the systematic versatility – of the appeal to the faculty of sympathetic imagination, as it was conceived of in the era of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thought.

<sup>46</sup> Gadamer discusses what he sees as the perceived limitations of Hegelian philosophy, especially its tendency, in the transition from Phenomenology to Logic, to rely on Cartesian methodology. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (Yale: Yale University Press, 1976), 111. See also my *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism*, ch. 4.

*Poetry and Imagination in Fichte and  
the Early German Romantics*  
*A Reassessment*

*Elizabeth Millán Brusslan*

To approximate my goal of reassessing the role of poetry and imagination in the work of Fichte and the early German Romantics, I will begin with a claim from a thinker who came after them, one who made major contributions to the question of aesthetics and imagination in the post-Kantian period. In *The World as Will and Representation* (Volume 2, Section 37), in the very first lines of the section entitled *On the Aesthetics of Poetry*, Schopenhauer writes: “I would like to lay down, as the simplest and most correct definition of poetry, that it is the art of bringing into play the power of imagination through words.”<sup>1</sup> The clarity of the claim is impressive, and if such a definition of poetry had ever been offered by the early German Romantics, my task in this chapter would be much easier. I will use Schopenhauer’s definition to keep a focus on poetry and imagination and their role in the task of philosophy as seen through the eyes of the early German Romantics and Fichte.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, Fichte’s use of the imagination stays close to the “power of imagination” referenced by Schopenhauer in his definition of poetry. It is a formative power of the mind. In contrast, the early German Romantics are more concerned with the art that this formative power of the mind brings into play. Fichte tells us how the imagination works, whereas the early German Romantics perform a sort of poetry in their writings, bringing the imagination into play.

In contrast to the striking clarity of the definition of poetry offered by Schopenhauer, what we find in Friedrich Schlegel’s famous *Athenäum*

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the connections between Schlegel and Schopenhauer’s view of poetry, see my “Aesthetic Humanism: Poetry’s Role in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel and Schopenhauer,” in Sandra Shapshay, ed., *The Palgrave Schopenhauer Handbook* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017): 179–96.

Fragment 116, a place where his views of poetry are highlighted, is the rather puzzling claim that “[r]omantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn’t merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature.”<sup>3</sup> Further complicating his account of poetry, Schlegel goes on to include in his notion of romantic poetry, “everything that is purely poetic, from the greatest systems, to the sigh, the kiss that the poeticizing child breathes forth in artless song . . . [even] the entire spirit of an author.”<sup>4</sup> We are dealing with a moving target as we grapple with just what Schlegel means with the term “poetry,” as we are told that, “[t]he romantic kind of poetry is still in a state of becoming; that is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected.”<sup>5</sup> Schlegel concludes the fragment with an imperative, namely, that, “in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic.”<sup>6</sup> If Schopenhauer is correct, that is, if poetry “is the art of bringing into play the power of imagination through words,” then, without a doubt, we have found poetry in Fragment 116. There is certainly plenty of play occasioned by the words comprising the fragment: Schlegel’s words do bring into play the power of the imagination. Even if the details need to be further refined, Fragment 116 makes a case for the central role of poetry for philosophy. In contrast, when we turn to the work of Fichte, poetry or “the art of bringing into play the power of the imagination through words” is not what springs immediately to mind. Especially if we focus upon the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Perhaps Fichte would not go so far as to say he would prefer to count peas than to do poetry (the way he dismissed history), but science or *Wissenschaft*, more than poetry, is the dominant theme of his philosophical project. Fichte’s influence upon the early German Romantics was strong and given that they were a group of thinkers who made poetry a cornerstone of their philosophy, we may ask whether part of Fichte’s influence

<sup>3</sup> All references to Schlegel’s work are to: Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, 35 volumes, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958 ff.). All further references to Schlegel’s work refer to this edition, hereafter as KFSa. Some of Schlegel’s fragments have been translated by Peter Firchow, in *Friedrich Schlegel: Philosophical Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). When I have used Firchow’s translation, the reference is to this edition, hereafter as Firchow. Some of Schlegel’s fragments and essays have been translated by J. M. Bernstein in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). I will use reference to this edition where relevant.

KFSa 2, p. 182/Firchow, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> KFSa 2, p. 182/Firchow, p. 31. <sup>5</sup> KFSa 2, p. 183/Firchow, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> KFSa 2, p. 183/Firchow, p. 32.



rested in a poetic spirit that the romantics divined in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. The question may, at first blush, appear ridiculous. After all, Fichte never developed an aesthetic theory, and there is little attention paid to aesthetic matters in his work. So, it may *seem* that aesthetics was of no importance to Fichte. As they almost always do, appearances deceive us in the case of Fichte's philosophy and its relation to the aesthetic.

Fichte's work has often been the victim of misreadings. Günter Zöller reminds us that "due to external circumstances, Fichte did not manage to provide a detailed philosophy of nature, which would soon be supplied by his successor-competitor, Schelling, albeit in a form that Fichte continued to criticize for its inadequate consideration of freedom."<sup>7</sup> This lack of a detailed philosophy of nature led most scholars to overlook his contributions to the philosophy of nature. Yet, as Reinhard Lauth revealed in his path-breaking study of 1984, *Die transzendente Naturlehre Fichtes nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, the world of Fichte's *Wissenschaft* is much richer than it has usually been taken to be. Lauth uncovers the philosophy of nature to be found in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.<sup>8</sup> In like manner, despite the absence of a developed aesthetic theory in his work, recent scholarship on Fichte and aesthetics opens a new question of whether the absence of a developed aesthetic theory is merely a matter of historical contingency or the effect of a view of philosophy that prevented such development.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Günter Zöller, "A Philosophy of Freedom: Fichte's Philosophical Achievement," in Matthew C. Altman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014): 286–99 at p. 290. For an excellent account of Fichte and Schelling's fraught philosophical relationship, see Sebastian Gardner, "Fichte and Schelling: The Limitations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in eds. David James and Günter Zöller, *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 326–49.

<sup>8</sup> Reinhard Lauth, *Die Transzendente Naturlehre Fichtes nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> French scholars Alexis Philonenko and Alain Renaut argue for the latter position, while thinkers such as Claude Piché, Faustino Oncina Coves, and Ives Radrizzani argue for the former. See: Alexis Philonenko, *La Liberté Humaine dans la Philosophie de Fichte* (Paris: Vrin, 1966); Alain Renaut, *Le Système du Droit. Philosophie et Droit dans le Pensée de Fichte* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986); Ives Radrizzani, "Von der Kritik der Urteilskraft zur Ästhetik der Einbildungskraft, oder von der kopernikanische Revoution der Ästhetik bei Fichte," in Erich Fuchs, Marco Ivaldo, and Giovanni Moretto, eds., *Der transzendentalphilosophische Zugang zur Wirklichkeit: Beiträge aus der aktuellen Fichte-Forschung* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2001): 341–59; Faustino Oncina Coves, "Rechte oder Ästhetik als Vermittlung zwischen Natur und Freiheit: Ein Dilemma bei Fichte?" in Erich Fuchs, Marco Ivaldo, and Giovanni Moretto, eds., *Der transzendentalphilosophische Zugang zu Wirklichkeit: Beiträge aus der aktuellen Fichte-Forschung* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2001): 361–79; Claude Piché, "The Place of Aesthetics in Fichte's Early System," in Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore, eds., *New Essays on Fichte's Later Jena Wissenschaftslehre* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002): 299–316. Howard Pollack-Millgate offers an insightful account of some lines of influence from Fichte to

In a letter to Goethe from June 21, 1794, we find a hint that the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was aware of the important role aesthetic elements could play in philosophy. Fichte praised Goethe's contributions to philosophy, writing:

Philosophy will not have attained its goal so long as the results of abstract reflection fail to conform to the purest spirituality of feeling. I consider (and have always considered) *you* the representative of the latter or that level of humanity which we have presently achieved. Philosophy is right to turn to *you*. *Your* feeling is its touchstone.<sup>10</sup>

With these words from Fichte, we find an important element needed to unpack the relation between imagination and poetry, namely, feeling. Philosophy should, Fichte claims, turn to Goethe because philosophy is in need of feeling. Does Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, steeped as it is in abstract reflection, conform to "the purest spirituality of feeling"? Certainly, both Schlegel and Fichte see a place for Goethe's poetry in philosophy. Let us now consider how each thinker accommodates Goethe's poetry in their philosophy.

Schlegel shared Fichte's admiration for Goethe and for the central role Goethe played in the development of philosophy. Consider what Schlegel has to say about both Fichte and Goethe in *Athenäum Fragment* Nr. 216, where he claims that "The French Revolution, Fichte's philosophy, and Goethe's *Meister* are the greatest tendencies of the age."<sup>11</sup> One can understand Schlegel's reference to Fichte's philosophy as a reference to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797–8), a work in which Fichte attempts to establish an absolute first principle for philosophy, an attempt that Schlegel (and Fichte, too) believed had revolutionized the field of philosophy. Ultimately, Schlegel rejected Fichte's attempts to establish a first principle for philosophy; indeed, Schlegel rejected *any* attempt to establish a first

Novalis in his "Fichte and Novalis on the Relationship between Ethics and Aesthetics," in *Fichte's System of Ethics: Papers from the Ninth Biennial Meeting of the North American Fichte Society, Philosophy Today*, vol. 52: 3–4 (2008): 335–47. Perhaps the most detailed analysis of Fichte's aesthetic views and a history of their reception is Daniel Breazeale, "Against Art? Fichte on Aesthetic Experience and Fine Art," *Journal of the Faculty of Letters, The University of Tokyo*, vol. 38 (2013): 25–42.

<sup>10</sup> Fichte's works have been presented in *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacob, and Hans Gliwitsky (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962–2012), and all references to Fichte are to this edition, cited by part, volume, and page number, hereafter as GA. Some of Fichte's writings have been translated in *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), hereafter as EPW. GA III/2: 143; EPW, 379.

<sup>11</sup> KFSA 2, p. 198/Firchow, p. 46.

principle for philosophy. Schlegel's anti-foundationalism is accompanied by a firm commitment to overcoming the separation of philosophy from poetry. In Critical Fragment Nr. 115, Schlegel writes that "the whole history of modern poetry is a running commentary on the following brief philosophical text: all art [*Kunst*] should become science [*Wissenschaft*] and all science art; poetry [*Poesie*] and philosophy should be made one."<sup>12</sup> The push to fuse poetry and philosophy is also expressed in Ideas Nr. 108: "Whatever can be done while poetry and philosophy are separated has been done and accomplished. So the time has come to unite the two."<sup>13</sup> Schlegel, in keeping with his project to unite science, art, and philosophy, draws our attention (in *Athenäum Fragment* Nr. 216) to the philosophical innovation present in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, the literary innovation found in Goethe's *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meister* (1795–6), and the social-political innovations ushered in by the French Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Despite a shared admiration for Goethe and an acknowledgment that poetry and feeling are valuable guides for philosophy, already in the details of this fragment we find hints of a theme that distinguishes the very approach to philosophy favored by the early German Romantics from Fichte's approach to philosophy. Unlike Fichte, Schlegel did not consider philosophy as the science of sciences, and he pushed for a fusion between disciplines that would guide us in our infinite progress to truth. In Schlegel's innovative intellectual project, art and aesthetic experience take a leading role. For Schlegel, philosophy not only needs to turn to poetry and to feeling (as Fichte had suggested in his letter to Goethe) but, more radically, philosophy *is* poetry. Philosophy, for the early German Romantics, becomes aesthetic in a way that it never did for Fichte. I am tempted to add, in a way it never *could* for Fichte. But recent work has made me hesitant to give in to the temptation to claim that Fichte's philosophy could *not* be poetic. And indeed, if we take Fichte's note to Goethe seriously, that is, if we take seriously his claim that philosophy needs poetic feeling as its touchstone, then we have some ground for thinking that Fichte was committed to an important bridge between poetry and philosophy.

There are two camps on this matter of whether there is room for an aesthetic theory in Fichte's work. For some thinkers, the lack of a developed aesthetic theory in Fichte's work is a matter of historical contingency:

<sup>12</sup> KFSa 2, p. 161/Firchow, p. 14.      <sup>13</sup> KFSa 2, p. 267/Firchow, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the call to unify the disciplines, see KFSa 2, p. 161, Nr. 115/Firchow, p. 14 and KFSa 2, p. 262, Nr. 108/Firchow, p. 104.

Fichte, had he lived longer, would have developed the aesthetic theory latent in his work. For others (and this position still tempts me), the lack of an aesthetic theory in Fichte's work is the result of deeper systematic commitments that excluded the development of aesthetic theory. Fichte gives his readers a detailed account of the power of the imagination, and the early German Romantics have a deep interest in poetry or what Schopenhauer called the "art of bringing into play the power of the imagination through words." Is part of Fichte's romantic legacy a poetic one? Before addressing this question, I offer a brief account of the relation between Fichte and the work of the early German Romantics.

### 1. Fichte and Early German Romanticism

The guiding philosophical spirit behind many of the contributions of Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) – the main philosophers of the early German Romantic Movement (*Frühromantik*) – was Fichte, who was described by Hölderlin as "the soul of Jena."<sup>15</sup> While Fichte was certainly a guiding figure for the development of Novalis' thought, the misleading title, *Fichte Studien*, given to those reflections by an editor, obfuscates Fichte's influence on Novalis.<sup>16</sup> The early notebooks written by Novalis during 1795–6 indicate that Novalis was not merely following Fichte's thought, but rather uncovering what he perceived to be the inadequacies of Fichte's philosophy. Likewise, Schlegel's work develops through conversation with (what he perceived to be) the flaws of Fichte's philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Yet, Schlegel's writings are also filled with expressions of deep admiration for Fichte's work. Recall Schlegel's claim, in *Athenäum*

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Manfred Frank in *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán Zañabert (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p. 114. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke. Großer Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, 15 vols., ed. Frederick Beißner (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1943–85). For more on the relations between Fichte and the early German Romantics, see my "Fichte and Early German Romantic Philosophy," in David James and Günter Zöller, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 306–25. The best source on the relation between Hölderlin and Fichte is Violetta Waibel, *Hölderlin und Fichte, 1794–1800* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000). See also Violetta Waibel, "From the Metaphysics of the Beautiful to the Metaphysics of the True: Hölderlin's Philosophy in the Horizon of Poetry," in Matthew C. Altman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014): 409–33.

<sup>16</sup> As Manfred Frank has pointed out, this title disrupted the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of *Frühromantik*, and it continues to confuse the careless reader.

<sup>17</sup> Schlegel's reflections on Fichte's philosophy are concentrated in two collections of his fragments, *Zur Wissenschaftslehre 1796* (KFSA 18, pp. 3–14, Nrs. 1–125) and *Geist der Wissenschaftslehre 1797–1798* (KFSA 18, pp. 31–9, Nrs. 126–227).

*Fragment* Nr. 216, that “The French Revolution, Fichte’s philosophy, and Goethe’s *Meister* are the greatest tendencies of the age.”<sup>18</sup>

Even if not aesthetic, Fichte’s philosophy was, as Schlegel observed, revolutionary in its own right – introducing new forms and posing new narrative challenges to the reader, and of course, uncovering a new starting point for all philosophy. Yet, as noted previously, while lauding Fichte’s philosophy as “one of the greatest tendencies of the age,” Schlegel was also one of the first to point to the limitations of Fichte’s approach to philosophy. In particular, Fichte’s search for a first principle for philosophy became a focus of Schlegel’s critique of Fichte’s philosophy. Fichte’s deductive method became a strident point of departure for the early German Romantics as they sought to make philosophy poetic.

## 2. The Absence and Presence of Beauty in Philosophy

In his writings, Fichte emphasizes all that can be accomplished by science. In the following passage from his 1800 work, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (from Book Three, Faith), we find good evidence of Fichte’s faith in science:

Science, first awakened by the pressure of need, shall later penetrate into the invariable laws of nature more thoughtfully and calmly, survey the whole power of this nature, and learn to calculate its possible developments. While remaining close to living and active nature and following in its footsteps, it shall conceive of a new nature . . . In this way, nature is to become ever more transparent to us until we can see into its most secret core, and human power, enlightened and armed by its discoveries, shall control it without effort and peacefully maintain any conquest once it is made.<sup>19</sup>

Fichte is not humble in declaring humanity’s dominion over nature, indeed, over the power to “conceive of a new nature.” For Fichte, nature can be exhaustively grasped by the charts and graphs of the scientist. To speak in the voice of the author(s) (Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin are each possible authors – Fichte is not) of 1796, *Das Älteste Systemprogramm/ The Oldest Program for a System of German Idealism*, Fichte seems to be “in the dark when it comes to anything that goes beyond charts and graphs.” For some thinkers of the period, the highest act of reason is an aesthetic

<sup>18</sup> KFSA 2, p. 198.

<sup>19</sup> References to Fichte’s *Vocation of Man* (*VM*) are to Peter Preuss, translator (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987). *J. G. Fichte, Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. R. Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky, Erich Fuchs, and H. Jakob (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1964 ff.), hereafter as *GA. VM*, p. 83.

act. The philosopher must possess as much aesthetic power [Kraft] as the poet, for without aesthetic sense, one cannot understand ideas. From this standpoint, we might ask how well Fichte really understands the idea of freedom, a cornerstone of his philosophy, if he lacks aesthetic sense. In Fichte's writings, no developed aesthetic system emerges. For example, his vision of our relation to nature is limited to an account of our domination over nature by a series of calculations. But nature has meaning for us not only because of the destruction it causes or the empirical data we can gather from it, but also because of its beauty (and a host of other aesthetic experiences we have of and with it).<sup>20</sup>

In Fichte's universe, human will, reason, and the development of science make the laws of nature transparent to us and enable us to have mastery over nature. Part of our *Bestimmung* or cultivation involves domination over nature. A minimal turn to the aesthetic is invoked by Fichte as he describes our highest *Bestimmung*:

The present world exists for us at all only through the commandment of duty. The other will likewise come to be for us only through another commandment of duty. For in no other way does a world exist for a rational being.

This, therefore, is my whole *sublime* vocation, my true being. I am a member of two orders. One purely spiritual, in which I exist through the bare pure will; and one sensible in which I act through my deed. The whole final purpose of reason is its own pure activity, simply through itself and without needing an instrument outside of itself, i.e., independence from everything which is not itself reason, absolutely unconditioned being.<sup>21</sup>

Our vocation may be sublime, but Fichte, while developing his *Wissenschaftslehre*, was not dedicated, as for example Kant had been, to developing a systematic account of the sublime. In the *Bestimmung* text, Fichte does approximate the "purest spirituality of feeling" referenced in his June 1794 letter for Goethe – he realized that in love there is life and without it death and annihilation. Fichte, however, neglected to see the power of the aesthetic as a way to love the world.<sup>22</sup> Why is there no sustained attention to aesthetics in the *Wissenschaftslehre*?

<sup>20</sup> For more on this, see my "Bestimmung as Bildung: On Reading Fichte's *Vocation of Man* as a *Bildungsroman*," ch. 3 of *Fichte's Vocation of Man: New Interpretative and Critical Essays*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013): 45–56.

<sup>21</sup> *VM*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> Hannah Arendt makes the point about the power of the aesthetic as a way to love the world in her *Men in Dark Times* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1967), see esp. p. 13.

There is no neglect of beauty or aesthetic experience in Schlegel's work. We may return to the previously mentioned tendencies fragment for evidence of the privileged space art had in his thought. Schlegel was captivated by Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*; it represented for Schlegel the paragon of what art could accomplish, immortalized, in the company of the French Revolution and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, as a tendency of the age. While Schlegel could only be partially supportive of the French Revolution (which collapsed all too soon into a Reign of Terror) and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (which he claimed had undesirable dogmatic, mystical aspects), he saw in Goethe's *Meister* a universal *Mischgattung*, a romantic model of what art could and should achieve.<sup>23</sup>

Early in the *Meister* essay, Schlegel tells us that in *Wilhelm Meister*, "art will become science, and life an art."<sup>24</sup> Given that the theme of the unity of poetry, philosophy, and science shaped so much of Schlegel's work, if *Wilhelm Meister* is indeed a novel in which such unity is achieved, we begin to see why Schlegel would identify it as a tendency of the age, and further, would claim that an understanding of the work would reveal everything that was happening in literature. There is an important sense in which Schlegel's *Meister* essay provides us with an answer to a question posed in *Athenäum* Fragment Nr. 168, namely, "what philosophy is fittest for the poet?"<sup>25</sup> Schlegel begins to answer the question in the very same fragment where it is raised, telling us that the philosophy fittest for the poet is a philosophy of freedom:

What philosophy is left for the poet? The creative philosophy that originates in freedom and belief in freedom, and shows how the human spirit impresses its law on all things and how the world is its work of art.<sup>26</sup>

Fichte's philosophy as developed in the *Wissenschaftslehre* certainly "originates in freedom," yet, does it show "how the world is its work of art"? While Fichte, with his view that "it is no more necessary that all men should be philosophers than it is necessary that they should be poets

<sup>23</sup> Its only fault was that it was not obscene enough for Schlegel's taste. An exploration of this charge would take us too far afield – it is, among other things, an indication of how important provocation was to Schlegel.

<sup>24</sup> The essay has been translated into English as *On Goethe's Meister*, appearing in J. M. Bernstein, ed., *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 269–86, hereafter as *OM*. I give the references to both the German original (KFSa 2, pp. 126–46) and to the Cambridge translation (*OM*). KFSa 2, p. 128/*OM*, p. 271.

<sup>25</sup> KFSa 2, pp. 191–2/Firchow, p. 39. <sup>26</sup> KFSa 2, pp. 191–2/Firchow, p. 39.



or artists,”<sup>27</sup> would not have been interested in being dubbed a poet or even a composer of poetic philosophy, there was a kind of *Dichtung* to be found in Fichte’s work, at least in the estimation of one of Fichte’s contemporaries. I refer to a certain Christian Erhard Schmid (1761–1812), who found only a blameworthy, “unendliche Dichtung” in Fichte’s idealism, an empty fiction far from poetry and certainly not beautiful, in fact, something much more akin to a *mißiges Hirngespinnst* than anything philosophically valuable. Poor Schmid realized only too late that his critique of Fichte would lead to what Dan Breazeale has well characterized as a philosophical street fight over the very identity of philosophy itself. A sketch of the main lines of their fight will help to bring some details of how imagination and poetry operate in the work of Fichte.

### 3. The Annihilation Act and Fichte’s *Unendliche Dichtung*

The clash between Fichte and Schmid was occasioned by Schmid’s *Bruchstücke aus einer Schrift über die Philosophie und ihre Prinzipien*.<sup>28</sup> Fichte’s response to Schmid was published in *Das Philosophisches Journal* in an article entitled, “A Comparison of Prof. Schmid’s System with the *Wissenschaftslehre*,”<sup>29</sup> and the article is an excellent place to get an overview of Fichte’s philosophy. In 1796, Fichte became the co-editor of the *Philosophisches Journal*, and when he began to publish his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, he did so in a series of installments for this journal. This was not because the journal was sympathetic to Fichte’s philosophy. Fichte’s co-editorship was a clever maneuver on the part of F. I. Niethammer, who did not want to alienate one of the most influential (and temperamental) thinkers of the period. Many of the contributions to the journal were attacks on Fichte’s philosophy, attacks to which Fichte was compelled to respond.<sup>30</sup> By making Fichte co-editor, Niethammer could safely publish articles that expressed strong arguments against

<sup>27</sup> “Vergleichung des vom Hrn. Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der *Wissenschaftslehre*,” *Philosophisches Journal*, Bd. 3, Heft 4 (1796), 267–320, hereafter as *Vergleichung*. GA I, 3: 235–71, at 254. An excerpt of this has been translated by Daniel Breazeale as, “A Comparison between Prof. Schmid’s System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*,” in EPW, 316–35, at 324.

<sup>28</sup> *Philosophisches Journal*, Bd. 3, Heft 2 (1795), 95–132.

<sup>29</sup> “Vergleichung des vom Hrn. Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der *Wissenschaftslehre*” (Bd. 3, Heft 4 (1796), pp. 267–320). An excerpt of this has been translated by Daniel Breazeale in *Fichte. Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 316–35.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Daniel Breazeale, ed. and trans. J. G. Fichte, *Introductions to the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Other Writings (1797–1800)* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), p. xiii. Breazeale explains Fichte’s choice to publish his *Wissenschaftslehre* in a series of installments for the *Philosophisches Journal* by emphasizing Fichte’s publication record in that journal and his role as co-editor. It is,



Fichte's breed of idealism and then invite Fichte to respond. Looking at some of Schmid's criticisms of Fichte's thought reveals some of the lines that Schlegel developed in his critique of Fichte.

In his reply to Schmid, Fichte claims that the method of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is simply the method of abstracting from all contingent parts of the I and thereby uncovering it as a pure activity. He describes it thus:

The method of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the following: It demands all to note what they generally and absolutely necessarily do when they say to themselves – “I” (everything depends on this, but precisely this arrival to the absolute with complete abstraction from all individuality is what few humans can achieve). The *Wissenschaftslehre* postulates: everyone who really takes on the demanded task will find that he posits himself, or what might be clearer to some, that he is both subject and object. In this absolute identity of subject and object consists I-ness.<sup>31</sup>

The I is that which cannot be a subject without at the same time being an object and vice versa. This identity is the starting point of Fichte's philosophy. He writes:

Through this identity of ideality and reality, critical idealism has its beginning. This is not an idealism in which the I is only a subject nor a dogmatism according to which the subject is treated only as an object.<sup>32</sup>

Fichte presents his idealism as critical rather than absolute. As indicated by the lines cited earlier, an idealism in which the I is only a subject is not critical, for critical idealism requires an identity of ideality and reality, a unity rooted in the I. In dogmatic idealism, the “subject is treated only as an object,” so it is also flawed. Fichte's claim is that he has discovered an identity that gives unity to knowledge (hence the title of his work, *Science of Knowledge*) and to philosophy. This is why he claims that:

however, also important to emphasize that the *Journal* was dedicated to questioning the feasibility of a philosophy based on first principles, and that Fichte's philosophy was the main target for many of the criticisms voiced in its various contributions. Hence, Fichte was compelled to answer in order to protect his system from these skeptical attacks, and replying to his critics in the same journal where the critics voiced their concerns was a clever strategy.

<sup>31</sup> Das Verfahren der Wissenschaftslehre ist folgendes: Sie fordert jeden auf zu bemerken, was er überhaupt und schlechthin nothwendig (darauf kommt alles an, aber gerade zu diesem Absoluten, mit gänzlicher Abstraction von aller Individualität, können wenigsten Menschen sich erheben) was er nothwendig thue, wenn er sich sagt: Ich . . . Sie postuliert: jeder der nur die geforderte Handlung wirklich vornehme, werde finden, dass er sich selbst setze, oder welches manchen klarer ist, dass er Subject und Object zugleich sei. In dieser absoluten Identität des Subjekts und Objects besteht die Ichheit (Ibid., p. 296). Cf. Breazeale, EPW, pp. 322–3.

<sup>32</sup> Durch sie wird der kritische Idealismus gleich zu Anfange aufgestellt, die Identität der Idealität und Realität, der kein Idealismus ist, nach welchem das Ich nur als Subjekt, und kein Dogmatismus, nach welchen es nur als Object betrachtet wird (Ibid., p. 297). Cf. Breazeale, EPW, p. 323.

The *Wissenschaftslehre*, with its first principle, displays not only all of philosophy, but also the conditions for all philosophizing. It dismisses not only everything, but everyone, who does not belong within its boundaries.<sup>33</sup>

According to Fichte, all of philosophy begins with and is determined by reflection upon the I:

What does one think when one thinks this principle? If the philosopher continues with this question, he finds that the exhaustive answer to this is the entire domain of philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

Schmid had claimed that any attempt to go beyond the primitives: will, understanding, and the givenness of objects, was bound to lead to confusion, to empty, unjustified claims. To this, Fichte replies that the goal of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is not to justify a system of things [*Dinge*] but to describe a series of acts [*Handlungen*].<sup>35</sup> Fichte does not deny that he must address the problem of the status that representations have, but this, he claims, is something quite different from giving an account of things as facts.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Fichte claims (against Schmid) that it is not a fact of consciousness that there are things, e.g., humans, animals, trees, etc. Rather, it is a fact of consciousness that this particular human, this particular animal, this particular tree, which moves before my eyes, exists. According to Fichte, every general concept presupposes, not a thing, but rather an abstraction that the mind performs because it is free.<sup>37</sup> The “I” is not a fact, for a fact is, on Fichte’s account, something found – and the I is

<sup>33</sup> Die Wissenschaftslehre stellt mit ihrem ersten Satze nicht nur alle Philosophie, sondern auch die Bedingungen alles Philosophierens auf; sie weist durch ihn ab, nicht nur Alles, sondern auch Alle, die nicht in ihren Umkreis gehören (Ibid., p. 298). Cf. Breazeale, EPW, p. 323.

<sup>34</sup> Was denkt man sich eigentlich, wenn man jenen Satz sich denkt? fragt der Philosoph weiter; und die erschöpfende Beantwortung dieser Frage ist die ganze Philosophie (Ibid., p. 300). Cf. Breazeale, EPW, p. 324.

<sup>35</sup> Der Zweck der letztern Wissenschaft ist nicht der, ein System von Dingen zu rechtfertigen, sondern eine Reihe von Handlungen zu beschreiben (Ibid., p. 302). “This latter science does not propose to justify any system of things, but rather to describe a series of acts” (Breazeale, EPW, p. 325).

<sup>36</sup> Dadurch allein aber leistet auch die Wissenschaftslehre was von der Philosophie zu fordern war. Es ist uns z.B. zur Genüge gefaßt worden, welche Prädicate der Vorstellung zukommen; was aber das Vorstellen eigentlich sei, wollten wir wissen. Dies aber läßt sich nur genetisch darstellen, so dass man den Geist zum Vorstellen selbst in Handlung setze (Ibid., p. 303). “It is only in this way that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is able to accomplish what was demanded of philosophy. We have, for example, been told frequently enough which predicates describe representation. But what we wanted to know was what *representation* really is. And this is something which can only be presented genetically, that is, insofar as one’s own mind is engaged in this very act of representing” (Breazeale, EPW, p. 326).

<sup>37</sup> Es ist auch nicht Factum des Bewusstseins, dass Dinge sind; nicht Factum desselben, dass Menschen sind, Thiere, Bäume, u.s.f, sondern nur, dass dieser bestimmte einzelne Mensch, dieses bestimmte Thier, dieser bestimmte Baum ist, die vor meinem Auge schweben. Jeder Gemeinbegriff setzt eine Abstraktion durch Freiheit voraus (Ibid., pp. 306–7). “Neither is it a

never found – it is the finder, the very condition necessary in order for anything to be found at all. Hence the I must be pure activity, a *Tathandlung* rather than a *Tatsache*.<sup>38</sup> For Fichte, the imagination plays a central role in the formation of our knowledge. According to Fichte, it is only “by means of free abstraction and only after being shaped by the imagination” that “what lies between these two extremes [i.e., between “things” and the “Act” of self-consciousness] becomes an object of consciousness” (Breazeale, p. 328). In short, the objects of consciousness are the result of both our freedom to abstract [*Freiheit der Abstraction*] and the formative powers of our imagination [*Bildung durch die Einbildungskraft*].<sup>39</sup> The process of abstracting from a particular tree that I see to the concept of tree in general is the product of the imagination in its freedom [*Produkt meiner Einbildungskraft in ihrer Freiheit*].<sup>40</sup> Fichte goes on to argue that the same process that guides our formation of concepts of things guides our formation of our concept of ourselves, that is, of our faculties of understanding and will.<sup>41</sup> Fichte’s use of “imagination” comes from Kant. It is a formative capacity of the mind. When he speaks of the formative power of

fact of consciousness that there are things. That there are men, animals, trees, etc. Is not a fact of consciousness; what is a fact of consciousness is only *that this specific individual man, this particular animal, and this specific tree* hovers before my eyes. Every generic concept presupposes a free act of abstraction” (Breazeale, EPW, p. 328). Cf. fn., p. 301 regarding the schematism and problem of thing-in-itself.

<sup>38</sup> Denn das Ich bleibt gar nicht als ein gefundenes, als ein Object übrig: sondern, wenn es doch ja nach der Analogie des bisherigen philosophischen Sprachgebrauchs benannt werden sollte, nach welchem sich die bisherige Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre nur zu sehr gerichtet und sich dadurch den Verdrehungen der Buchstäbeler bloss gestellt – eine Tathandlung (Ibid. p. 307). “I would rather not call this a fact, since the I does not remain left over in the manner of something found, that is, as an *object*. Instead, I would prefer to call it an *Act*. (At least this is what it should be called if it is to have a name which bears some analogy with customary philosophical terminology, though the previous presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was too influenced by such customary usage and thereby exposed itself to the distortions of literalists)” (Breazeale, EPW, p. 328).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 307. Cf. Breazeale, he translates the passage thus: “Only by means of free abstraction and only after being shaped by the imagination does what lies between these two extremes [i.e., between “things” and the “Act” of self-consciousness] become an object of consciousness” (EPW, p. 328). Fichte writes: “Was zwischen diesen beiden Endpunkten liegt, ist Object des Bewusstseynes lediglich durch Freiheit der Abstraction, und Bildung durch Einbildungskraft.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 307/EPW, p. 328.

<sup>41</sup> Ich abstrahiere von dem Besondern in jedem Erkennen, und setze mich als das Erkennende überhaupt, gerade so wie ich vorher einen Baum überhaupt setzte; sondere diese Vorstellung von den übrigen Prädicaten, die ich mir zuschreibe, ab, und fixiere sie in dem Begriffe eines Erkenntnisvermögens, oder eines Verstandes, gebe diesen Begriffe ein Bild, und sage: siehe, das ist mein Verstand (Ibid., p. 308). “Abstracting from the particular features of every act of knowing, I posit myself as *the knower as such*. I do this in exactly the same way that I previously posited a tree as such, namely, by separating the representation in question from the other predicates which I ascribe to myself, fixing this representation in the concept of a *faculty of knowledge* or an *understanding*, and furnishing this concept with an image, so that I can say, look, this is my understanding” (Breazeale, EPW, p. 329).

the imagination, he is referring to the schematism, which is the process that allows us to subsume a particular under a general category. Kant would not agree that abstracting from a particular tree to the concept of a tree in general is a product of the imagination in its freedom. Kant is careful to distinguish the free schematism from the determinant one. The former leads to our experience of the beautiful, for here the imagination “plays” with the concepts of the understanding. In the latter, the imagination is bound by these concepts. Fichte fails to distinguish between these two processes; hence, we may sympathize with charges such as Schmid’s that Fichte’s philosophy is an infinite poem, *unendliche Dichtung*, in which reality becomes the product of the creative powers of the mind, with the upshot that the connection to the objective realm becomes tenuous. Schlegel was also critical of Fichte’s neglect of the objective world. Both Schmid and Schlegel locate the same weak spot in Fichte’s thought, namely in the missing link between the work and play of the imagination. In fact, this oversight might be the result of an endemic problem in Fichte’s work: the lack of room for an aesthetic theory, a place to understand the true play of the imagination, a place that would take us to poetry. While Schmid accused Fichte of generating idle figments of the imagination,<sup>42</sup> rather than a science of knowledge, Schlegel was dissatisfied with Fichte’s claim to have secured a first principle for philosophy. For Schlegel saw Fichte’s foundationalism as a move that created a hierarchy that was at odds with the romantic revolution to blend philosophy and poetry.

#### 4. Finding a Place for Art in Philosophy

The leading current of Schlegel’s dissatisfaction with Fichte’s thought can be found in what Fichte leaves out as he begins to rebuild philosophy from the ground up. According to Schlegel, any attempt to begin with a pure point of certainty is impossible:

To abstract entirely from all previous systems and throw all of this away as Descartes attempted to do is absolutely impossible. Such an entirely new creation from one’s own mind, a complete forgetting of all which has been thought before, was also attempted by Fichte and he too failed in this.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Breazeale, EPW, p. 326.

<sup>43</sup> KFSA 12, p. 111. I develop this in more detail in my *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), esp. pp. 71–90. For more on early German Romanticism and aesthetics, see my “The Aesthetic Philosophy of Early German Romanticism and Its Early German Idealist Roots,” in Matthew C. Altman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014): 389–408.

For Schlegel and the early German Romantic philosophers in general, philosophy must be both historical and poetic. As Schlegel emphasizes in his lectures on the history of philosophy, knowledge of what came before is necessary, because any given philosophical system is just one among many, and in order to fully understand each part, some view of the whole must be present.<sup>44</sup> Schlegel dismissed as historically myopic any view of philosophy that laid claim to having established truth with absolute certainty. As he was fond of reminding his readers, the search for truth involved an infinite progression; indeed, one could not *be* a philosopher, but only *become* one. For Schlegel, philosophy is historical but is not thereby reduced to history, because it concerns the analysis and investigation of ideas, opinions, and thoughts: Philosophy is best understood via a historical critique of these ideas, opinions, and thoughts.<sup>45</sup>

Schlegel displayed a high degree of characteristic *Frechheit* in his claims regarding the limitations of Fichte's philosophy, but this should not overshadow the great respect he had for both the work and the person. We can summon, once again, *Athenäum Fragment 216*, which nicely captures Schlegel's admiration for Fichte. Yet, a cursory look at the key term "tendency," in *Fragment 216* cited earlier, leads us to the root of a tension that would inevitably arise between the philosophical approaches of these two thinkers. Despite Fichte's insistence to the contrary, his philosophy was "merely" a tendency, a "temporary venture" (as Schlegel puts this), but not anything like "the secure path of a science." A tendency does not stand in isolation from that which came before it or from that which will inevitably come after it; it is something that is shaped by the past and will shape the future. A tendency, for Schlegel, is much like a tradition; it is formative, but not in any absolute sense, and its boundaries toward the past and the future are open. In the wake of a departure from first principles, tendencies are an important tool in our search for truth.

A tendency could never support the architecture of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Yet it was precisely tendencies, with their share of uncertainty, that were the very fabric of Schlegel's critical philosophy, a critical philosophy quite unlike Kant's critical philosophy, but not entirely unrelated to it. Indeed, I believe that a fruitful point of comparison between Fichte and Schlegel's critical philosophy is found in the role of certainty operating in each thinker's view of philosophy: Fichte's critical philosophy was a kind of pure foundationalist idealism (Fichte, after all, stressed that any attempt

<sup>44</sup> KFSa 12, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> KFSa 12, p. 112.

to fuse idealism with realism was doomed to be an “inconsistent enterprise”),<sup>46</sup> whereas Schlegel’s critical philosophy represents a break from any systematic, scientific approach to reality. There was a kind of aesthetic liberation operating in the work of the early German Romantics, one that Fichte (justifiably lauded as the philosopher of freedom, but not of aesthetic liberation) never embraced.<sup>47</sup>

Schlegel’s critique of Fichte was not carried out as an attempt to finish something started but not completed by Fichte (as Fichte was allegedly carrying out the revolution Kant had begun but had not finished). Schlegel was interested in a reform of the very conception of philosophy that was shaping the post-Kantian period. He sought to move philosophy away from its moorings in science and the concomitant deductive method that had taken hold and to bring it into the company of art and history.

According to Schlegel’s view of philosophy, the philosopher can point to tendencies, to probable states of affairs, to beliefs that cohere with one another, but she cannot uncover the absolute foundation of all knowledge. By contrast, Fichte held that in order to be a “science of knowledge,” philosophy must be based upon an absolute first principle, and the *Wissenschaftslehre* is his attempt to secure this principle and thereby solve the problem of philosophy’s starting point. In that work, Fichte repeatedly reminds the reader that “philosophy has to display the basis or foundation of all experience.”<sup>48</sup>

Schlegel faults Fichte for attempting to deduce all of reality from the self-positing act of consciousness. This, says Schlegel, is based upon a flawed view of the nature of philosophy:

If one postulates a system of knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) and searches for the conditions of its possibility, one falls into mysticism and the most consequential solution – the only possible one – from this point of view, is *the positing of an absolute I* – through which the form and content of an absolute theory of knowledge are given at once.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> IWL, p. 12/ GA I, 4:189.

<sup>47</sup> For an excellent account of Fichte as the philosopher of freedom, see Günter Zöller, “A Philosophy of Freedom: Fichte’s Philosophical Achievement,” in Matthew C. Altman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014): 286–99.

<sup>48</sup> IWL, p. 8/ GA I, 4:186.

<sup>49</sup> Postuliert man Wissenschaft und sucht nur die Bedingung ihrer Möglichkeit, so geräth man in den Mysticism und die consequenteste von diesem Standpunkte einzig mögliche Auflösung der Aufgabe ist – das Setzen eines absoluten Ich – wodurch Form und Inhalt der absoluten Wissenschaftslehre zugleich gegeben wird. (KFSA 18, p. 7, Nr. 32).

According to Schlegel, Fichte's philosophy is a tendency of the age. That is, Fichte's influence is undeniable and his emphasis on the importance of human freedom is central to the task of philosophy. But for Schlegel and the early German Romantics, Fichte's philosophy is not revolutionary enough, staying as it does within the confines of a philosophy based on first principles and so of hitching philosophy to a scientific framework that was bound to be at odds with the revolutionary call to liberate philosophy from the hierarchies that dominated most visions of philosophy of the period (and that continue to shape our view of philosophy). For the romantics, philosophy would only be done in the spirit of freedom when philosophy and poetry were on equal footing; that is when philosophy itself became aesthetic in a way it never did for Fichte.

### 5. Concluding Remarks

The anti-foundationalist philosophy developed by Schlegel is at odds with Fichte's science of knowledge. In the place of conquest, domination, and certainty, we find the mess of uncertainty, and a push to fuse philosophy and poetry. Born of such messiness and such fusion is a new space for a freedom Fichte did not develop in his philosophy: the free play of understanding and imagination that is a kind of *unendliche Dichtung* that is no mere figment of the imagination, but rather a source of cultural inspiration, indeed, the sort of creative philosophy referenced by Schlegel in Athenäum Fragment Nr. 168. Namely, one that "originates in freedom and belief in freedom, and shows how the human spirit impresses its law on all things and how the world is its work of art." Schopenhauer's clear definition of poetry comes to mind in this context, namely, his claim that "the simplest and most correct definition of poetry, that it is the art of bringing into play the power of imagination through words."<sup>50</sup> Fichte helped prepare the ground for a philosophy that would hold a sacred space for poetry, that would, indeed, attempt to bring poetry and philosophy into some sort of unity. Nevertheless, the world of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, while perhaps not the *unendliche Dichtung* Schmid diagnosed, never delivers the poetry for which Schlegel and his romantic circle were searching.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 424.

*Art, Imagination, and the Interpretation of the Age:  
Hegel and Schlegel on the New Status of Art and  
Its Connection to Religion and Philosophy*

*Allen Speight*

Both Hegel and the early German Romantics devoted significant effort to characterizing their own projects in terms of an interpretation of what Friedrich Schlegel called the “tendencies of the age.” In *Athenäum* (#216), Schlegel famously heralded the French Revolution, Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as key moments of the contemporary world. Hegel’s own construal of the “new era” in which his *Phenomenology of Spirit* was published also includes a consideration of these three distinctive political, philosophical, and artistic moments (among others) in the key transitions at the end of the “Spirit” chapter. A key task for both Hegel and Schlegel that a reconstrual of the present moment made possible was a new understanding of what Schlegel talked about as the “reanimation and reorganization” among the “invisible elements” (*Ideen* #4, 22) of morality, poetry, religion, and philosophy and what became in Hegel the relation between Objective Spirit (the ethical, social, and political world) and Absolute Spirit (art, religion, and philosophy).

Despite the large differences between their two projects, Hegel appears (both in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and elsewhere) to acknowledge the importance of new claims about art and poetry that Schlegel and other Romantics make in this period. Hegel’s sense of this Romantic achievement, however, is not merely focused on its significance as a crucial moment in the history of aesthetics (which it of course is) or on the new perspective it might afford for construing specific artists and the artworks they produce (which Hegel also acknowledges) but more broadly on a larger view of *how art as an imaginative and interpretive activity matters*. In the *Phenomenology*’s account, for example, it is with a particular emphasis on the artistic achievements of the Romantics that Hegel construes the possibility of a transition from the moral conscience to a new understanding both of recognitive possibilities within the ethical world of the new era as well as toward a new understanding of religion and its relation to philosophy.



To construe Hegel's Jena view of the Romantics in light of an understanding of the significance of art for the "interpretation of the age" – and consequently for its connection to philosophical and religious currents within that age – offers a somewhat different cast to Hegel's relation to figures such as Friedrich Schlegel. The standard narrative of that relationship is one that typically is described in terms of a kind of narrative of degeneration away from the central achievements of German Idealism – or so Hegel's understanding of Romantic irony as a distancing from the insights of idealism would make it seem. It is this standard narrative that is often further glossed by reference to the well-known personal details involved in the relation between Hegel and Schlegel – a relation notable, depending on who is describing it, either for the enmity expressed (from Hegel's side to Schlegel) or the indifference involved (in Schlegel's apparent lack of interest in Hegel).<sup>1</sup>

What will be pursued here, however, is instead a view that stresses certain common concerns in the role that art plays in the post-Romantic era. A complete account of the connections involved would of course require a more constellatory approach that includes work of more figures from the world of Jena and Berlin romanticism and post-Kantianism, but the more tightly drawn focus of this comparison may be helpful within the framework of that larger project. In particular, such a comparison can help us see the common interests Hegel and Schlegel share on such questions as the *origin of art*; art's relation to *religion* and particularly to the growing study of the history of religion and mythology; the relation of both art and religion to *philosophy*; the role of the *unconscious* (or even instinctual) in art; and the nature of *romantic* and *post-romantic* modes of art. Above all, it is an exploration of these Jena connections between Hegel's and Schlegel's work that will allow us to see why the Romantics were so crucial for Hegel's own account of *why it is that art matters* – a question that, I argue, remains for us in contemporary philosophical conversation very much in the post-Romantic context in which Hegel located it.

<sup>1</sup> The relationship is not an easy one to track, given the paucity of direct interactions: Hegel of course came to Jena much later than Schlegel and his Romantic cohort, but it is thought quite likely that he did attend Schlegel's lectures there before the latter departed. Comparative accounts exploring aspects of their philosophical approaches include, among others, Fred Rush, *Irony and Idealism: Rereading Schlegel, Hegel and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Michael Forster, *German Philosophy of Language: From Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegel und Hegel," *Hegel-Studien* 2 (1963), 203–50; and Judith Norman, "Squaring the Romantic Circle: Hegel's Critique of Schlegel's Theory of Art," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. W. Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

In this chapter, I will first look at what I am calling the “narrative of degeneration” concerning Schlegel and the Romantics that is the presumably official view of Hegel’s later Berlin *Aesthetics* lectures (Section 1), but then turn back from that to the Jena context where the commonalities between the two over the first decades of the 1800’s are clearest (Section 2) and where a common genesis for similar moments within the post-1807 development of both thinkers can also be seen (Section 3). The final section (Section 4) will return to the central question of the post-Romantic view of what art means and, in particular, the legacy of Hegel’s and Schlegel’s views.

### 1. Hegel on Romanticism, Idealism, and the Emergence of Art

I want to start with one of the most famous passages in which we can see the standard view on which Hegel places the Romantics’ approach to art in a historical context. This is a section that bears in Hotho’s edition of the *Aesthetics* the title “Historical Deduction of the True Concept of Art.”<sup>2</sup> This historical account is developed in three parts: the first devoted to the *Critique of Judgment*; the second to the role of Schiller and Schelling in particular; and the third (our interest here) to Schlegel’s Romanticism. In the first section, Hegel makes clear that he thinks that the *Critique of Judgment* “constitutes the starting point for the true comprehension of the beauty of art” but acknowledges that “only by overcoming Kant’s deficiencies could this comprehension assert itself as the higher grasp of the true unity of necessity and freedom, particular and universal, sense and reason” (*LFA* I: 60b-1).<sup>3</sup> This overcoming is achieved, Hegel thinks, by Schiller and Schelling:

[The] *unity* of universal and particular, freedom and necessity, spirit and nature, which Schiller grasped scientifically as the principle and essence of

<sup>2</sup> The title is likely Hotho’s, but the contents of the section can be found in the lecture notes, as well. Hegel’s “narrative of art” is often talked about, but, as I’ve argued, there’s a good deal of complexity in what Hegel takes to be that narrative task. He actually thinks that there are three levels of narrative required for the philosophy of art, one corresponding to each of the three main divisions of the aesthetics: the first (which we see in the “Historical Deduction” passage) at the level of the concept of artistic beauty; the second and more famous across the particular forms of symbolic, classical and romantic; and the third of the five large genre classifications in their development with one another. See my “Hegel and the ‘Historical Deduction’ of the Concept of Art,” *Blackwell Companion to Hegel*, eds. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), pp. 353–68.

<sup>3</sup> Translations from the so-called standard edition of the *Lectures* are taken from the two volumes of T. M. Knox, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art (LFA)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

art and which he labored unremittingly to call into actual life by art and aesthetic education, has now, as the *Idea itself*, been made the principle of knowledge and existence, and the Idea has become recognized as that which alone is true and actual. Thereby philosophy has attained, with Schelling, its absolute standpoint; and while art had already begun to assert its proper nature and dignity in relation to the highest interests of mankind, it was now that the *concept* of art, and the place of art in philosophy was discovered. (LFA I: 62–3)

And finally, Schlegel and his brother appear as the third of three key moments:

A. W. and Friedrich von Schlegel, greedy for novelty in the search for the distinctive and extraordinary, appropriated from the philosophical Idea as much as their completely non-philosophical, but essentially critical natures were capable of accepting. For neither of them can claim a reputation for speculative thought. Nevertheless, it was they who, with their critical talent, put themselves near the standpoint of the Idea . . . and directed a spirited polemic against the views of their predecessors. And thus in different branches of art they did introduce a new standard of judgment and new considerations which were higher than those they attacked. But since their criticism was not accompanied by a thoroughly philosophical knowledge of their standard, this standard retained a somewhat indefinite and vacillating character. (LFA I: 63)

The narrative arc Hegel has in mind in the *Aesthetics* lectures, then, is one that involves a Kantian *beginning* in the development of the concept of art, an Idealist *consummation*, and then a Romantic *decline*. The picture of the importance of the Romantics in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by contrast, is quite different. Although there are persisting similarities, the earlier perspective of the Jena Hegel on romanticism – at least in terms of the position of romanticism within the overall narrative arc – has a somewhat different character that is due partly to the different philosophical tasks involved in that work and partly to the sheer difference in *Zeitgeist* and tone between 1806/7 Jena and the post-Napoleonic Berlin of the 1820's.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the development of Spirit as it moves from the world of ancient Greece to the world contemporary with Hegel involves an exploration of each of the three key moments of Schlegel's *Tendenzen*: the French Revolution (in the *Phenomenology* section entitled "Absolute Freedom and Terror"; Fichte's philosophy (in the section at the start of "Conscience"); and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (which, among other figures in the romantic literature, including Schlegel's own, is essential background for the section on the "Beautiful Soul, Evil and its Forgiveness").

In the *Phenomenology* account, the Romantics are not simply playing the role of ironic degeneration from the highest moment of the conception of art as they are in the *Aesthetics* but rather appear as the active forces of the world of contemporary spirit that Hegel is trying to discern. Hegel's oft-discussed presentation of the "beautiful soul" – the culminating moment in the trajectory of Spirit – was in fact shaped in an important way by the philosophical and literary concerns of the Romantics. Hegel concludes the section on "conscience" at the end of the Spirit chapter with a sort of group portrait of several varieties of "beautiful soul" that are drawn particularly around the Romantic engagement with this idea: Although the specific details have been interpreted in different ways, most scholars acknowledge the important roles of Novalis and Schlegel here, as well as Jacobi, Goethe, and Hölderlin. Much as in his appropriation of Greek tragedy in the first part of the Spirit chapter and of comedy and satire in the second, Hegel in this final section drew on the romantic novel to sketch the figures in whom he was interested. More particularly, he follows Schlegel in turning the scene as a whole around a kind of a *contestation* of types of romantic novel. This is a dramatic move that Schlegel himself had attempted in his novel *Lucinde*, and one that allows Hegel to include a primary recognition scene between a Schlegelian figure (the confessing ironist agent) and a Jacobian one (the "hard heart" that seems drawn on the title figure of the *Woldemar*), as well as a background of novelistic "beautiful soul" figures, including those sketched in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear, then, that Hegel gives Schlegel and fellow Romantics a key role in shaping the emerging phenomenological portrait of the contemporary moment in which Spirit's completion is reached. The end of the Beautiful Soul section is, however, still within the context of Spirit's development. The larger cognitive structures that are present are those involving what Dean Moyar calls "direct" recognition – that is to say, recognition between two individuals, as opposed to the "indirect" structures of recognition available within ethical wholes (even if those individuals seem to be cast, as they are at the end of the Spirit chapter, as part of a larger movement).<sup>5</sup> The larger cultural structures implicit in Schlegel's *Tendenzen* and Hegel's ultimate account of the modes of art, religion, and philosophy are brought in to play in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* only in the section immediately following the forgiveness of the Beautiful Soul, the

<sup>4</sup> For more on Hegel's sources and intentions in this section, see my *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dean Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 163.

“Religion” chapter. This chapter has been less identified in the scholarly literature with the Romantics than the Beautiful Soul section, but, as I will argue in the next section, the connections between Hegel and Schlegel on the reimagination of art, religion, and philosophy are important for understanding the larger range of Hegel’s engagement with the Romantics.

## 2. Hegel and Schlegel on Art and Religion

My focus in this section will be on the development that follows the scene of the Beautiful Soul’s recognition: what happens after this culminating moment at the end of the Spirit chapter (VI) in the rather under-discussed transition from Spirit to Religion (VII). Central to this story is a new development in Hegel’s account: one of the moves that surprises and puzzles many *Phenomenology of Spirit* readers because it does not seem to have a parallel in what precedes it. Although the Religion chapter re-collects the moments of the preceding Spirit chapter, Religion itself does not begin from the Greek perspective that we find at the beginning of Spirit but instead with the religions of ancient Persia, India, and Egypt, which now precede the Greek “*Kunstreligion*.”

The key to reading this peculiar transition and development – from the crowning Romantically inspired moment at the end of the Spirit chapter to the dawning of light in ancient Persian religion – can be found, I argue, in the notion of *Kunstreligion*, and specifically how Hegel reads the history of art. This transitional moment in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* offers, among other things, an interesting perspective on Hegel’s new inclusion of non-Western, pre-Greek modes of art and religion, something that is often taken to be a *later* achievement of Hegel: Gadamer, for example, claims that Hegel’s interests in this more expansive reading of the history of world religious and aesthetic culture were sparked by his Heidelberg encounter with Friedrich Creuzer and Romanticism.<sup>6</sup> But I will argue that one can see an earlier parallel with Romanticism, a Jena one and not a Heidelberg one.

My argument is that just as the Romantics frame the moment of the completion of Spirit in the novel of the beautiful soul, so the new world heralded by the recognition at Spirit’s end (the “reconciling *Yea*, in which the two “I’s let go their antithetical existence” [PS 9.362 ¶671]) likewise has been pre-shaped by Romantic hands. In this case, even though we will

<sup>6</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, “Hegel und die Heidelberger Romantik,” in *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), pp. 71–81.

also see some clear differences, the parallel with Schlegel seems clear again: in particular, the move that Schlegel makes in 1800 at the time of the *Gespräch über die Poesie* from irony to symbolism. (As Ernst Behler puts it: “Schlegel is no longer content with the ironical affirmation of the modern artist’s subjectivity,” but looks, especially in the second section of the *Gespräch* the *Rede über die Mythologie*, for something that now has the name “religion.”)<sup>7</sup>

What I want to look at in this second section is a set of parallels between Schlegel’s interests in the *Gespräch* and Hegel’s in the Religion chapter. If we are interested in the curious transition that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* undergoes at this point from Spirit to Religion, we should first compare the relation among art, religion, and philosophy in Schlegel’s *Gespräch* with the new development of Religion that Hegel takes up in this *Phenomenology* chapter. But then, as I will argue in the following section, the relative interests of Hegel and Schlegel in these questions about art, religion, and philosophy in the *Gespräch* of 1800 and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 should also be compared with the later shape of the work of both in the immediately following years of the 1810’s and 1820’s, as they both revise their respective accounts in response to the work of Friedrich Creuzer.

In the first part of this, what I will outline here is the reverse of how Behler explains the *Gespräch* in his introduction to that work, asking the reader to imagine *back* from the 1807 *Phenomenology* to the 1800 *Gespräch*. Behler, like others, sees the second part of the *Gespräch*, the “Lecture on Mythology,” as a response to new developments within the Romantic conversation about art, religion, and philosophy. If Schlegel had talked about art and religion in somewhat separate terms prior to this, the new accounts of religion given by his friend Schleiermacher in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* and by Novalis in *Christianity or Europe* have posed the question of religion in a new way that Schlegel now takes up. (And one can see the results of this both in the *Rede* as well as in works such as the *Ideen*.)

Schlegel is deeply interested in the question of the origin of poetry and art and first offers an account that would seem to be in keeping with the praise that he and Schiller give to the immanentist view of the Greek gods: “For this is the beginning of all poetry, to cancel the progression and laws of rationally thinking reason, and to transplant us once again into the

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Behler, *Introduction to Friedrich Schlegel: Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park and London: Penn State Press, 1968), p. 27.

beautiful confusion of imagination, into the original chaos of human nature, for which I know as yet no more beautiful symbol than the motley throng of the ancient gods.”<sup>8</sup>

He makes clear, however, that there is a need to look more widely beyond the ancient Greeks if one wants to give a more complete account of origins:

... to accelerate the genesis of the new mythology, the other mythologies must also be reawakened according to the measure of their profundity, their beauty, and their form. If only the treasures of the Orient were as accessible to us as those of Antiquity. What new source of poetry could then flow from India if a few German artists with their catholicity and profundity of mind, with the genius for translation which is their own, had the opportunity which a nation growing ever more dull and brutal barely knows how to use. In the Orient we must look for the most sublime form of the Romantic.<sup>9</sup>

The conclusion of the lecture is a ringing endorsement of how the new age requires now looking at both the origins *and* the future of art:

he who could understand the age – that is, those great principles of general rejuvenation and of eternal revolution – would be able to succeed in grasping the poles of mankind, to recognize and to know the activity of the first men as well as the nature of the Golden Age which is to come. Then the empty chatter would stop and man would become conscious of what he is: he would understand the earth and the sun. This is what I mean by the new mythology.<sup>10</sup>

Let’s compare this with the structure of Hegel’s Religion chapter in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel’s interest is not the Schlegelian one of a “new mythology,” but rather in a reconception of the notion of religion that a reconstrual of art can help effect. One of the peculiar things about this chapter – and a source of criticisms about it – is that Hegel does not yet have a worked-out, developmental account of a triadic notion of Absolute Spirit: As with Schlegel, there is in the Hegel of the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* a sort of fusion of concerns relevant to both art and religion. (And, I should add, this is something that is true not just about the *Phenomenology* but also of the earliest version of the *Encyclopedia* at Heidelberg, so as much as a decade later. As Gethmann-Siefert has argued, this then starts to change, and we have the familiar parallel structures of Berlin lectures that

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Schlegel: *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park and London: Penn State Press, 1968), p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 86–7. <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 88.



separate into the historical development of religion and the historical development of art.)<sup>11</sup>

Although the fused account that Hegel offers in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*'s Religion chapter does still explain how art and religion *separate*, the larger stakes that Hegel is aiming for show an interesting affinity with Schlegel's account of religion and art in the "Lecture on Mythology" (and to some extent also in the *Ideen*). On this account, it is the central section of the chapter – that devoted to the *Kunstreligion* – that provides in many ways the fulcrum on which this fused narrative depends.

In fact, the key in many ways to reading the chapter is a comment from the lectures: "The first interpreter of religious ideas . . . is art alone" (*LFA* I. 316). We can't examine that claim in all its detail, but it's important to note the two sides Hegel sees to it. On the one hand, subjectively, Hegel takes this back to Aristotle's understanding of the common root of *philosophia* and *philomythia* in wonder: "[W]onder only occurs when man, torn free from his most immediate first connection with nature and from his most elementary, purely practical relation to it, that of desire, stands back spiritually from nature and his own singularity and now seeks and sees in things a universal, implicit, and permanent element. In that case for the first time natural objects strike him; they are an 'other' which yet is meant to be for his apprehension and in which he strives to find himself over again as well as thoughts and reason" (*LFA* I.315). The experience of wonder, Hegel says, is crucial for what he calls "the subjective aspect of the first origin of symbolic art" – what we might take to be the dispositional stance involved for those experiencing it – but Hegel goes on to talk about the "objective" side of artistic production of mythological symbols. Art did not come on the scene merely when human beings immediately saw "the Absolute directly in the objects actually present," but "only when the mind produces from its own resources both the apprehension of its Absolute in the form of what is external in itself and also the objectivity of this more or less adequate connection" of spirit with nature (*LFA* I.316). On Hegel's view, art is in fact a sort of middle stance that exists between an (initial, thoughtless) "purely spiritless immersion in nature" and a later (what Hegel likes to call "prosaic," as opposed

<sup>11</sup> See my "Religion, Art and the Emergence of Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and the introductions by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert to her editions of the lecture notes: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst: Berlin 1823* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998).



to the speculatively engaged “poetic”) attitude of detachment that is “altogether freed” from nature as something external to it.

The first section of the *Phenomenology*’s Religion chapter is entitled “Natural Religion.” It divides into three subparts, devoted, respectively, to God as Light (*Das Lichtwesen*; the Persian moment), Plant and Animal (*Die Pflanze und das Tier*; the Indian moment), and the Artificer (*Der Werkmeister*; the Egyptian moment). Art might seem to be distant from this development – the *Lichtwesen* section begins with an abstract “pure I” – but Hegel’s account draws nonetheless on a noticeably aesthetic vocabulary – even when his goal is to describe that very abstractness itself: “the essential simplicity of its thought moves aimlessly about in it without stability or intelligence, enlarges its bounds to the measureless, and its beauty [*Schönheit*], heightened to splendor [*Pracht*], is dissolved in its sublimity (*Erhabenheit*)” (PS 9.371/¶686). Similarly, in this section, Hegel draws on the rich language of an idea’s complete “penetration” of an object (*Durchdringung*), which is central to his philosophy of art.<sup>12</sup>

While Hegel makes use of aesthetic categories in even the most abstract moment at the beginning of Natural Religion, art’s interpretive efforts begin to play an even more explicit role in the later sections. Both of the next two sections (Plant and Animal, the Artificer) describe the growing power over natural organic shapes held by a figure Hegel refers to as the Artificer (or “artisan,” *Werkmeister*; on its first appearance – PS 9.372/¶690 – cited however merely as “the worker,” *der Arbeitende*). Hegel makes clear that the artificer brings together plant and animal shapes in such a way that what is really produced is the producer himself, a “self-consuming self, i.e., the self that becomes a Thing” (PS 9.372/¶690): “The artificer [*der Arbeitende*] therefore retains the upper hand over these mutually destructive animal spirits” (PS 9.372/¶690).

The key to the development as a whole (and the movement from Natural Religion to Art Religion) can be seen in the emergence of the artificer – located by Hegel in the pyramid – and monument-fashioning Egyptian religious realm. The move is, on one side, a move away from blended organic shapes available in the natural realm to a focus on the

<sup>12</sup> Compare, for example, Hegel’s description of the pure “I” (“which, in its externalization has within itself as universal object the certainty of its own self, or, in other words, this object is for ‘I’ the penetration [*Durchdringung*] of all thought and all reality” [PS 9.371/¶685]) with his definition of beauty in the Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* (“the penetration [*Durchdringung*] of intuition or image [*Anschauung, Bild*] through thought” [section 460]).

human form itself and, on the other side, from an instinctual to a more self-conscious mode of artistic creation as the interpreter of the natural world becomes explicitly a self-interpreter. Hegel locates this key transitional moment within the context of Egyptian religion, where the artisan produces creatures such as the Sphinx, an “ambiguous being which is a riddle to itself, the conscious wrestling with the non-conscious, the simple inner with the multiform outer, the darkness of thought mating with the clarity of utterance, these break out into the language of a profound, but scarcely intelligible wisdom” (PS 9.375/¶697). The hybrid human/animal “monsters in shape, word and deed” that are central to this moment of the artisan are “dissolved into spiritual shape” in the newly self-conscious activity of the artisan as he is transformed into an artist proper: Now we have “an outer that has retreated into itself, and an inner that utters or expresses itself out of itself and in its own self”; we have “thought which begets itself, which preserves its shape in harmony with itself and is a lucid, intelligible existence” – in other words, no longer an artificer but a self-aware artist (PS 9.375/¶698), or a figure who can be classified finally as a “spiritual worker” (*geistiger Arbeiter*).

The transition from Natural Religion to Art Religion heralds the new importance of artistic activity in the proper sense as above all self-interpretive. The three sections of the Art Religion section – specifically, those concerned with “abstract,” “living,” and “spiritual” works of art – move from modes of art where creative process and artwork are often separate items (the “abstract” forms of the statue, hymn, oracle, and cultic sacrifice) to the “living” forms of human participation (absorption in the mysteries and athletic competitions of Greek civic life) and then to the distinct kind of unification of work and spontaneity available in the various modes of poetry (where this movement is in a way recapitulated, from the bard’s distance from his epic poems to the culmination of drama, where the enacting artist *is* the actor/agent standing directly before his audience). It is at this point also that speech (*Sprache*) decisively emerges as the mode in which the self “exists as self” – in contrast with the muteness that had pertained in the Egyptian world of the artificer, where the work produced by his *Arbeit* was still only “soundless” (“mere noise and not speech,” revealing only “an outer, not the inner self” [PS 9.375 ¶695]).

The final section of the Religion chapter transitions to Hegel’s account of *offenbare Religion*, a term that is perhaps best translated as “manifest” religion, as opposed to the more expected term “revealed” religion (*geoffenbarte Religion*). Just as natural religion required the interpretive efforts of art, so the religion that Hegel calls “manifest” could not have emerged

in the form it does without having passed through the moment of artistic self-awareness. The importance of this Greek and artistic passage to Christianity has been discussed in terms of the larger demythologizing project Hegel takes up in the third section of the Religion chapter's critique of *Vorstellung* – a reading that bolsters the account we have given of art's presence in the chapter. The point to stress here would be that Hegel's demythologization is something that is not an externally imposed mode of critique of religion but is *carried out by art itself*.

If my reading of the Religion chapter is correct, then, contra Gadamer and others, the birth of what Hegel is looking for in a triadic developmental account of art that links pre-Greek art to the story from Greece to Goethe is present already in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, even before Hegel enshrines the “symbolic” as such as the first moment of his familiar triad of the symbolic, classical, and romantic as forms of art in the *Aesthetics*. And the comparison with Schlegel's *Gespräch* would suggest that even before Hegel's Heidelberg years there are important ways in which Hegel's project shares concerns with the roughly contemporaneous Romantic project of reimagining religion and art. As we have seen, both works have as a central animating idea a view of art that: (a) puts new stress on the role of the *artist* as the figure from whom this new view comes; (b) connects in important new ways with a new understanding of *religion*; and (c) casts a wider historical net back to the earliest then known attempts at art, thereby breaking up the interpretive dyad of classical/romantic that had characterized the age of Schiller, thereby offering an opening to new scholarly work on ancient religions.

### 3. Post-1807: Hegel, Schlegel, and the New Importance of Symbolic Form

With these parallels between the 1807 Hegel and the 1800 Schlegel in mind, it is important briefly to see how both thinkers then come to add the notion of the “symbol” to their account of this history as it emerges in the decade and a half or so following. The emergence of the symbol in both accounts is a testament to the encounter of both with Friedrich Creuzer's work. In Schlegel's case, when he revised and edited the *Gespräch* for the edition of his *Collected Works* that was published between 1822 and 1825, he moved from a rather indiscriminate use of both “allegory” and “symbol” that had characterized the early edition of the work to a consistent replacement of the first term with the second; and the title of the pregnant second section is now not just *Rede über die Mythologie* but *Rede über die*

*Mythologie und Symbolische Anschauung*. Of course Schlegel's religious views had changed in the meantime, but as Dieckmann has shown, it is the influence of Creuzer that changed Schlegel's appeal to the symbol.<sup>13</sup>

As for Hegel, his aesthetics is often known for its concern with the "end" of art, but like Schlegel in this period he is also interested in a serious revision of the account of art's origins, one that draws on new available sources for non-Western art and religion: Hegel talks about "the inner process of the origin of art [*den inneren Entstehungsgang der Kunst*]" in so far as this can be derived from the Concept of the ideal in its development up to true art" (VÄ 1.406), and it is precisely in the section on the "Symbolic Artform" in the *Aesthetics* lectures that he says as much as he does anywhere about how art *comes to be* (he otherwise devotes remarkably little of the *Aesthetics* to the question of the artistic process or the conditions for the emergence of art).

Hegel says in the "Symbolic Artform" section of the lectures that Creuzer gets at a "deeper and rational meaning to ancient myths," while acknowledging that the ancients may not have thought about them in the way that we do.<sup>14</sup> In Indian and Egyptian art, the symbol expresses the "fermentation" [*Gärung*] that is "directed toward a not-yet-existent art form: everywhere something is sought that is not yet the free concept . . . something is sought that is still natural or is only intended as spiritual."<sup>15</sup> A crucial point of agreement between Hegel and Creuzer seems to be that, even if ancient peoples were not aware of the symbolic content in their religious mythology, they nonetheless "employed such images . . . because they were still in a poetic condition; they were habituated to becoming aware of what is inward in the mode of fantasy, not in the mode of thought." (As Hegel cites Creuzer, this does not mean that the symbolism of ancient religions is a (mere) *poetic fabrication* [*keine Erdichtung*] but rather something that is "embedded" or concealed therein.)

<sup>13</sup> Liselotte Dieckmann, "Friedrich Schlegel and Romantic Concepts of the Symbol," *Germanic Review* 34:4 (1959): 276–83.

<sup>14</sup> There is still a dearth of scholarly treatments of Hegel's appropriation of Creuzer, but exceptions include Christoph Jamme, "'Göttersymbole': Friedrich Creuzer als Mythologe und seine philosophische Wirkung," in *Mythos als Aufklärung: Dichten und Denken um 1800* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), pp. 199–210; Martin Donougho, "Hegel and Creuzer: Or, Did Hegel Believe in Myth?" in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. David Kolb (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 59–80; and Otto Pöggeler, "Hegel und Heidelberg," *Hegel-Studien* 6 (1971): 65–133.

<sup>15</sup> Hegel, *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 13: pp. 393–407.

The parallels visible in Schlegel's and Hegel's early (1800/1807) views of the relation between religion and art thus move, under the influence of Creuzer, to an account that joins this development to the notion of the symbol. Along with many others in the larger scholarly community, both Schlegel and Hegel develop this further as new research into non-European civilizations continued: Schlegel's interests in the new historical perspective on art's development led him particularly (as it did his brother) to a focus on ancient India, while Hegel stressed Egypt.

There is of course no need to underscore the differences that remain between Schlegel and Hegel on large questions about these topics – one need only remember Hegel's claim about symbolic art that it is ultimately Reason that "is always the shaper [*Bildnerin*] of images, the deviser of frameworks [*Gestalterfinderin*]." <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Hegel and Schlegel shared over the first couple of decades of the nineteenth century an identifiable concern with new approaches to the question of art and its genealogy. If we are right about at least some of the features of this new concern with art, it would be worthwhile to ask what remains of the legacy of the interest that Hegel and Schlegel shared in reimagining the conception of art's origins and relation to religion and philosophy. In the final section, I will turn to this question of the legacy of their views in the post-Romantic world.

#### 4. Hegel, Schlegel, and the Post-Romantic Legacy of their Views

What is the importance for the post-Romantic world of the concerns that Schlegel and Hegel shared regarding art? I will briefly suggest three lines of exploration that have a genealogical connection to their thinking about these issues. Taking up the most recent point we have examined first, I would list these in terms of (1) the importance of symbolic form in the context of a view of art that cannot be understood in terms completely separated from religion and philosophy (and one might add now also from the contemporary natural and social sciences); (2) the persistence of certain unresolved competing narratives (beautiful immanence versus sublime transcendence, for example) within the historical account of art and its symbolic forms; and, finally, (3) a new sense about how and why art

<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures. Together with an Introduction by Annemarie Gethmann-Sieft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 122.

matters, which may indeed be the overriding question – at least in Hegel’s view – that emerges from Romanticism.

(1) One can see the persistence of something like the Hegelian and Romantic interest in symbolic form in the nineteenth century in Vischer’s aesthetics (with its triad of fusion, distance, and play) and in later appropriations in the twentieth century by figures such as Panofsky, Gombrich, and Warburg (whose organization of his art collection according to the triad of “icon, idol, image” owes a direct debt to Vischer).<sup>17</sup> What is characteristic about the persistence of this interest in the symbolic into the post-Romantic era is a disinclination to pursue approaches (such as those of Riegl and Wölfflin) that seek a more insulated view of artistic form on its own terms. This part of the Romantic legacy may well have a new importance within the contemporary academy’s construal of art, since Hegel’s and Schlegel’s interests in searching beyond the Greeks for a longer historical account for the origins of art now have important contemporary correlates in investigations (by evolutionary theorists, anthropologists, archeologists, and others) into far-earlier, pre-historic remnants of human artistic activity. While many of the earliest exemplars of pre-historic art can certainly be discussed in strictly aesthetic terms, the wider symbolic connections to religious and cultural practices would seem to have a new relevance.<sup>18</sup>

(2) Warburg and Vischer shared with Hegel and Schlegel a sense that the pull of the symbolic may in fact lead in two different and competing directions: Dieckmann has nicely characterized these as the “immanentist” (roughly what Hegel sees in the beauty of Greek art, where the god in sculpture is what it signifies, without remainder) and the “transcendent” or “sublime” (visible in both the “symbolic” and “romantic” modes of art

<sup>17</sup> See, among others: E. H. Gombrich, “The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols,” *American Psychologist* 20 (1965) 34–50; Arnaldo Momigliano, “Friedrich Creuzer and Greek Historiography,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 9 (1946), 152–63; Edgar Wind, “Warburg’s Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and Its Meaning for Aesthetics,” in Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); and Michael P. Steinberg, “Aby Warburg and the Secularization of the Image,” in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, eds. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 316–38.

<sup>18</sup> On philosophical attempts to wrestle with the challenge of early art, see among others Stephen Davies, “Defining Art and Artworlds,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73:4 (Fall 2015); and *The Artful Species: Aesthetics, Art and Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (New York: Free Press, 1992); and Peter Lamarque, “Paleolithic Cave Painting: A Test Case for Transcultural Aesthetics,” in *Aesthetics and Rock Art*, eds. T. Heyd and J. Clegg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

where meaning and its expression are distinct). Dieckmann is right to see this structure of competing narratives in Schlegel, and the variants of Hegel's own Berlin lecture series on both aesthetics and religion give ample attestation to the way he wrestled with how to relate these competing narratives to one another.<sup>19</sup>

(3) There are many ways of talking about the influence of romanticism on art and many ways of following certain lines of thought from the period of German Idealism and Romanticism. M. H. Abrams, for example, is often cited in his comparison of the four modes of critical theory in *The Mirror and the Lamp* – mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective, each reflecting a concern within one of the four dimensions of art (that is, work, audience, artist, and world). The takeaway here is sometimes thought to be the connection between romanticism and expressivism (Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Mill on poetry are the figures he cites in explaining it). The new status of the artist does change things for Hegel and the Romantic generation, but there would also seem to be, in the romanticism that Hegel made central to his account of the new shifts in how we moderns are to think about art, religion, and poetry, a “romantic” aspiration that is broader – one that goes across all those four dimensions. If that's right, then the “post-Romantic” – the phase of art that Hegel takes Schlegel to introduce for us – is one that is especially open to a new exploration of art's connections with philosophy and religion but is above all aware of the centrally human question of meaning and interpretation that art raises.

<sup>19</sup> The first narrative variant (a “Hellenistic” one, visible especially in the 1820/1 and 1828/9 aesthetics lectures) offers a story about the growing artistic consciousness of symbolic activity as such, drawing a seemingly direct line from the “riddle” of the Sphinx to the “solution” to the problem of symbolic representation in art in the human form that Oedipus and Greek art make known; the second narrative variant (a more “Hebraic” one, which Hotho follows the 1823 and 1826 lectures in adopting) stresses instead what Hegel calls the “purifying” role of the experience of sublimity in Hebrew (and to some extent Indian) poetry as the overcoming of the symbolic altogether. A longer account can be found in my forthcoming “Hegel on the Symbolic Form of Art,” in *G. W. F. Hegel: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst: Klassiker Auslegen*, eds. Birgit Sandkaulen and Niklas Hebing (Berlin: de Gruyter).

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